1: Bowen-Jones et.al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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[P.128]

*175 64 and in 1877, the first use by the Elected Members of the tactic of absenting themselves on occasion of disagreement with the Governor-as-President.

During the 1870's and 80's commercial boom, the associated rise of the *bourgeoisie*, together with the example of party politics in England, and the *175 *Risorgimento* in Italy, all produced a headiness in Maltese political thinking and a clear division of interests. In 1883 the Governor reported that government 64 was now being obstructed by the appearance in the Council of two groups, apart 665 from that of the appointed members. The first, the *riformista* group was essentially a pro-English language faction, the second the *anti-riformista* was pro-Italian, that is favouring the old dominance of Italian language and culture. From this time onward political parties were born, to English eyes in strange and not easily recognisable forms. In Malta as in other countries in which such parties were sudden products of factional conflict rather than as in England slow crystallisations of attitudes, the names, the labels, such as 'Nationalist', 'Constitutionalist', 'Labour', 'Progressive', 'Workers' are misleading rather than illuminating. To English legislators, then and since, the difficulty of recognising lines of cleavage other than those with which they are by experience familiar can be very dangerous.

*175 64 As noted later (p.130) the greatest part of the population was little affected through education by the many developments that were taking place. This group, the Maltese-speaking rustics and labourers, was usually illiterate. In the new liberal constitution promulgated in 1887 this element of the population further restricted by age, financial and legal qualifications was to be represented on the Council of Government by ten members themselves selected by rigorous financial and literacy qualifications. The remaining four elected members, even more rigorously selected by financial criteria, were to be chosen by special electors, viz. ecclesiastics, nobles, large landowners, senior members of the University, and members of the *Bourse*. This system of representation, logically defensible at all points, was to have two tragic results of particular relevance to our present study. The first was to ensure that a great deal of power without either the privilege or steadying influence of responsibility was given to the most cosmopolitan and the least Maltese of the Islands' people. Secondly that the cleavage of interests within this largely professional class, although stemming from differing legitimate interpretations of their own ideas of Maltese welfare, soon led to rarefied and rather sterile contentiousness in which little reference was made to the facts of real life in Malta. The old dichotomy between the Maltese and the Knights became perpetuated in a division between the upper middle-class Europeanised Maltese, and the remainder. It would be permissible to suggest that the bridging of this gulf often appeared more important to Englishmen than to the Maltese themselves, although there are of course notable exceptions.

The allocation of power provided for the supremacy of the executive over what had now become a legislature, even although the appointed members were as a group in minority, but it made the wielding of such supremacy a more delicate matter than had been previously the case. No dyarchical division between imperial and local interests was made. For our purposes, however, these and other details of the 44 constitutional articles, are of less significance than the fact that Dr. Fortunato Mizzi and Count Strickland, who in 1886 together led the agitation which led to the new Constitution, were in open disagreement two years later.

*175 64 665 Externally this was a period in which England, France, and to some extent Germany were entering on a contest for naval supremacy, and in which the short burst of conscious European desires for imperial aggrandisement produced many tensions. Increased naval and dockyard activity in Malta was paralleled by a rising tide of secular education, anglicisation and pro-Italian, pro-bourgeoisie reaction. The Maltese and Catholic Strickland, President of the Committee of Privileges of the Maltese Nobility, became Chief Secretary to the Government in 1889, and in his support of Maltese development on English rather than Italian lines, carried on the policy of the equally Maltese and Catholic Savona, one-time Director of Education.

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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By the end of the century the struggle had resolved itself into extremes. Mizzi and his followers resorted to continuous legislative obstruction as the only but rather unworthy weapon left for what they maintained was a fight for responsible government. Strickland as Chief Secretary pointed correctly to the damaging effects such tactics were having on all policies including those of education, public health, etc., but conducted an offensive/defensive battle on equally intransigeant lines. Meanwhile British, Imperial as opposed to economic, effort was at its climacteric and Malta as a fortress, whose only value was as a fortress, had to 'suffer' the consequences; a necessary qualification must be made that this really entailed only subordination in status and was accompanied by great advances in all that the mid-twentieth century would term 'welfare services'.

In 1903 Anglo-Italian relations were good and improving, the Crown and the Vatican, Governor and Archbishop all in amity, while in Malta, 180,000 people had 10,000 enfranchised electors of whom less than 4,000 ever voted. In the Legislative Council, however, tempers were at blazing point and obstruction produced deadlock. Followed Chamberlain's bombshell abrogating the constitution. With effect from 3rd June the Governor's Executive Council and the official group within the Council of Government were given majority power and complete control over policy and action. The reserve powers were re-invoked in all their strength. Malta entered the Modern Age in an unhappy political state, a state vocally resented by a few, ignored by the apathetic majority and a cause of unhappy puzzlement to Westminster.

In retrospect, to the writer at least, the most amazing feature of these developments appears to be their inevitability. Judged in isolation, it may appear facile to suggest that with the stage as set in preceding centuries, with players such natural 'typecast' products of past experience, no other play could have been produced. Judged along with the other evidence, the unity, the cohesion of all things Maltese do make it rather difficult to subscribe here to a doctrine of free-will.

Of the elements in Maltese social life most affected by institutional forces two are of very relevant interest to us, viz. public health and education. Some brief consideration is therefore given to the main developments of these sectors.

As noted in Chapter VI A the death rate in the Maltese Islands fluctuated considerably but showed a slowly accelerating decline. During the century that elapsed between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the beginning of World War I, the main health improvements resulted from public works construction of a piped water-supply and sewerage systems in the most populated parts of the island of Malta. Developments in preventive remedial medicine and in disease control were slower mainly because of their greater dependence on trained medical staff and on public acceptance of new ideas.

At the mid-nineteenth century conditions were not very propitious for the consideration of suggestions for reducing mortality. Forecasts of impending Malthusian catastrophe were combined with diatribes on the improvidence of early marriage in many surveys by articulate Maltese of a presumed state of overpopulation. The inarticulate members of society continued to regard as normal conditions of which Sutherland (5) said: 'I have very seldom met with conditions so obviously injurious to health, and so likely to determine outbreaks of epidemic disease as those presented by many houses'. In Valletta the Knights had built a sewerage system and a piped water supply but pollution of the latter by the former was common. In the villages, the deficiency of water, refuse accumulation and the use of 'ordure rooms' were a product of ignorance and a cause of ill-health.

The Cholera epidemic of 1865 which slew 3,600 people eventually forced action upon the Government and after much general discussion a Commission of Public Health was appointed in 1874. Significantly enough, attention was focussed on the high rate of child mortality: in that same year, of over 4,000 recorded deaths, more than 2,000 were of children under five years of age. Between 1874 and the end of the century a series of reports put the blame on a series of associated factors. The ancient Three Cities and the new unrestricted

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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I did the fieldwork on which this study is based at this period in Malta's constitutional history. A new constitution was promulgated late in 1961, and elections took place in February 1962. In place of dyarchy, it provided for 'concurrent powers' on foreign affairs and defence to be held by the Malta Government and a United Kingdom Commissioner.

The first Maltese political parties were born out of the controversy over language which followed the publication in 1880 of the Keenan report on education. This recommended that English should be taught in place of Italian in the primary schools, although students might later take Italian as an elective subject. In the Lyceum and the University, except for the Faculty of Theology, all work was to be done in English. These recommendations, which the government tried for many years to implement, weakened the dominant position which Italian had enjoyed in the educational system. As Italian was the language of the law courts, the clergy and the University, it was something of a class symbol. Most of the educated classes, and especially the lawyers and priests, strenuously resisted the move to downgrade it in favour of English. Many of the refugees from the Italian wars, who came to Malta after 1850, gave encouragement to the partisans of Italian. The Italian movement also whipped up considerable support amongst the clergy and their parishioners by declaring that English would certainly bring with it increased Protestant influences.

The dispute thus created interest groups which were to dominate Maltese politics for the next fifty years. On one side was the pro-English, or *riformista*, party led first by Sigismondo Savona, later the Director of Education, and subsequently by Count (later Lord) Gerald Strickland. This party, which generally supported government policy, favoured close cultural and political ties with Britain. By the 1920's, it became known as the Constitutional Party. Its successor, the Progressive Constitutional Party, is led by Strickland's daughter, Miss Mabel Strickland.

The *anti-riformista* or pro-Italian party was led by Dr. Fortunato Mizzi and later by his son, Dr. Enrico Mizzi. The Nationalist Party eventually emerged out of this group, and today, although the language issue is quite dead, it is still one of the two major political parties. Both parties campaigned for support in the villages and thus, for the first time, forcefully presented national political issues to the masses.

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000 political issues to the masses. The pro-Italian group came to
197 dominate the elected members, and blocked the affairs of govern-
648 ment to such an extent that Britain re-established the official
668 majority.

● [665] Britain did not succeed until many years later in implementing the recommendations of the Keenan Report. The language of instruction in the primary schools remained English or Italian, at the option of a student's parents – the so-called '*pari-passu*' system. In 1921, Britain attempted to remove language from the political arena by stipulating in the new constitution 'that nothing shall be done by way of legislation or administration which shall diminish or detract from the position of English as an official language or to reduce its use in education or in the public service.'[1]

197 For the first six years after the 1921 Constitution was promul-
665 gated, the government was in the hands of the political groups
668 which eventually merged into the Nationalist Party: Monsignor Panzavecchia's 'Unione Maltese' and the 'Partito Democratico Nazionalista' led by Enrico Mizzi. The newly-formed Labour Party at first supported the Nationalists, but later became a firm ally of Strickland's Constitutional Party. Monsignor Michael Gonzi, now Archbishop of Malta, was a representative of the Labour Party until he became Bishop of Gozo in 1924. During this early period, the only serious political skirmish occurred, not surprisingly, over the 1923 Pari-Passu Bill by which the Nationalists introduced both English and Italian as compulsory subjects in the elementary schools. Strickland attacked the bill on the ground that it made no provision to teach Maltese, the language of the masses. He maintained that without a firm knowledge of their own language, children could never learn two foreign
[648] languages at the same time. Although the British at first declared that this act was contrary to the spirit of the constitution, it was allowed to become law.

665 The Constitutional Party, supported by the Labour Party, won
666 the 1927 general elections, and Strickland became Prime Minister. The elections, however, were marred by an incident which embittered the relations between Strickland's supporters and their opponents. On the day before the election, the Nationalists circulated thousands of copies of a perjured affidavit which declared that Strickland was a Freemason. Although the perjurer, a

[1] Section 57.

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notorious criminal whom the Nationalists hid until after the elections, was later convicted, the accusation jarred the solidly Catholic electorate and undoubtedly cost Strickland many votes. 665 666

In the years that followed this election, Malta was torn by an unprecedented political struggle between the Strickland Government and the Church. Since this dispute in many ways foreshadowed the present conflict between the Church and the Malta Labour Party, it is worth while to examine it in some detail. 659

While Strickland was the leader of the opposition, he made frequent attacks, both from the floor and through his newspapers, on the priests sitting in the Assembly. He maintained that the clergy should not take part in politics. In doing this he made many enemies, for his attacks were often bitter and insulting. For example, he once offered a cash prize to the person who gave him the best reason for having the Bishop of Gozo removed from office. On another occasion, he announced that for a small sum of money, even a horse could become a Papal Marquis.

Relations between Strickland and the Church, already strained, deteriorated rapidly after he became Prime Minister. When the two monsignori who represented the Archbishop in the Senate voted against his first budget, he considered that the Church had declared war on him. This was followed by a public demonstration against the Archbishop. At the same time, Strickland also launched a blistering attack through his newspapers on the two clerical Senators. Following this, there was a whole series of petty disputes which culminated in the famous Father Carta case.

Father Carta, a Sardinian monk, had been sent to Malta by the Superior General of the Franciscan Conventuals to resolve a disciplinary problem in one of the Order's Maltese convents. He soon discovered that a certain Maltese monk, Father Guido Micallef, was one of the principal trouble-makers, and arranged for his transfer to the Order's house in Liverpool. At this point Strickland intervened. He asserted that Father Micallef was being exiled because he had supported the Constitutional Party in the 1927 elections, and refused to issue the necessary exit permit. The Church was furious at this interference in what it regarded as its internal affairs. In the wrangle which followed, both the Governor and the Archbishop became involved, Father Micallef was expelled from the Order and defrocked, and the Cabinet asked the Governor to petition the Holy See to investigate the incident.

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659 A Papal Delegate visited Malta and concluded that the differences between the government and the Church could best be settled by means of a concordat. During most of the year following the Papal Delegate's visit, Britain tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a concordat and to get the Holy See to forbid the Maltese clergy to take part in the general elections scheduled for May 1930. The Vatican, however, declared that Strickland was not *persona grata* and that as long as he remained in power, a concordat was not possible.

In Malta, the relations between the Strickland Government and the Church went from bad to worse. In April 1930, two Constitutional Party Ministers gathered many sworn statements that Monsignor Gonzi, the Bishop of Gozo, had instructed priests to preach against the Constitutional Party and to refuse absolution to its supporters. This inquiry greatly angered the Church. On the 666 first of May, the Archbishop and the Bishop of Gozo issued a joint 659 pastoral which forbade people to vote for Strickland or those can- 648 didates who supported him. In view of the spiritual sanctions that [664] threatened people who voted for the candidates of one of the two [642] major parties, Britain had no option but to cancel the elections. It subsequently suspended the constitution, but kept the Strickland ministers on as advisers.

197 A Royal Commission went to Malta to investigate the trouble. Following its report, Britain restored the constitution and 64 abolished the teaching of Italian in primary schools. In June 1932 ●665 the Nationalists defeated Strickland and his supporters in a bit- 66 terly contested election in which 96 per cent of the electorate voted. However, their period in office was very brief. The Governor dismissed them in November 1933 for deliberately evading the constitutional provisions regarding language, for they had set about to re-establish the primacy of Italian in the educational system and the civil service. Once again the administration of the islands became the responsibility of the Governor.

186 During the fourteen years of Governor's rule which followed, 64 the deep wounds caused by the long, harsh political conflict slowly healed. The first Italian bombs of the war finally killed the language dispute. The united defence effort and the common suffering caused by the prolonged bombardment further helped to reunite political rivals and suppress parochial quarrels. Britain awarded the people of Malta and Gozo the George Cross for

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their heroism, and after the war restored representative government.

In the first election under the new constitution, the people voted overwhelmingly for the Labour Party, then led by Dr. Paul Boffa. But in 1949 a disagreement between Dr. Boffa and his Minister of Public Works and Reconstruction, Mr. Dom Mintoff, split the party. The Nationalists, with the support of Dr. Boffa's new Workers' Party, formed the next few governments. Dom Mintoff's Malta Labour Party gradually swallowed the Workers' Party and finally defeated the Nationalists in the 1955 general election.

There was almost constant friction between the Church and the Mintoff Government during the three years it was in office. From the outset, Mintoff showed himself reluctant to submit to the authority of the Church. His refusal to pay the traditional call on the Archbishop, Monsignor Gonzi, when he took office was symbolic of this independence. Many incidents contributed to the disagreement between the two, which grew more intense as both became more outspoken in their criticism of each other. Perhaps the most serious clash occurred over the Archbishop's stand on the Government's proposal to link Malta more closely with Britain. On the eve of a referendum concerning this proposal, Monsignor Gonzi made a broadcast in which he said that he could not support the integration proposal because Mintoff had failed (whether by design or circumstance is an open question) to secure adequate guarantees from Britain to protect the position of the Roman Catholic religion. In spite of this, the electorate supported Mintoff's proposal; but relations between the Labour Party and the Archbishop remained strained.

Then, shortly before he resigned, Mintoff sparked off a sharp dispute with the Church by hanging in the National Museum a painting taken from St. John's Co-Cathedral. Originally, the government had sent the painting, a Caravaggio, to Italy to be restored. But the government seized it when it returned and declared that since the Co-Cathedral was government property, the painting was a national treasure that should be properly cared for and displayed to the public. In the course of the acrimonious dispute which followed, Mintoff, who had appealed the matter to the Vatican, was ordered by the Holy See to return the painting. He finally returned it on the night before he resigned.

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578 665 795 The relations between the Labour Party and the Church continued to deteriorate after the resignation; finally, in 1961, they gave way to open hostility. Both sides abused each other in the course of the election campaign. On 9th April the Church placed Mintoff and many of the Labour leaders under an interdict for their disrespect to the Bishop. A little over a month later, the Bishops issued a circular condemning the Labour papers. These sanctions intensified the conflict. Finally, just six weeks before the election, the Church, through the Diocesan Joint Council of Catholic Lay Associations, launched a massive campaign to persuade the people to vote against the Labour Party. The campaign was successful: the parties which the Church supported defeated the Labour Party at the polls, and the Nationalist Party took office.

578 659 665 795 The reader will have noted the similarity between the course of the conflicts of Strickland and Mintoff with the Church. Both took place after relatively long (for Malta) periods of representative government. Both involved a series of rather petty disputes which became progressively more bitter and divided the country. Both culminated in the Church imposing sanctions which ultimately led to the electoral defeat of its opponents. In each case, approximately one-third of the population chose to face Church sanctions rather than abandon its political leaders. Most of the actual incidents which provoked the disputes were quite out of proportion to the conflict they created. To my mind, these incidents were symptomatic of the inherent conflict between an elected government and a Church which has long exercised great authority in both secular and religious spheres.

It is not my intention to make a detailed analysis here of the complex causes underlying the present conflict between the Malta Labour Party and the Church. At this point it is sufficient to know that the dispute exists. In later chapters I shall be concerned with tracing its effects on the social organization of the villages. In the course of this study, it will also become apparent that there are conflicts between secular and religious interests in the villages which are quite unrelated to national political issues.

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which does not have these honours. Other honours are the right to perform rituals, indulgence to persons visiting the church, and particular ecclesiastical offices. To a considerable extent these are rewards for meritorious conduct, measured by contributions to the decorations of the church, or the number of vocations, or special devotions performed in a parish.

During certain religious processions and ceremonies this ranking becomes an important determinant of the order in which the participants take part. Formerly, during the annual St. Gregory procession, virtually the entire hierarchy of Malta could be seen lined up on the ground. But this procession of parishes was abolished and the ceremony modified in 1927, among other reasons because of a dispute between the Canons of Senglea and Birkirkara over a question of precedence. But the St. Gregory procession in Gozo is still held every March. Then it is possible to see parish following parish in order of precedence, and the confraternities of each, in their turn, ranked according to their position in their own parish hierarchy. At the front of the procession is the youngest parish, the one with the lowest rank. It is followed by parishes in ascending order of seniority until the oldest Collegiate Chapter. Then come the religious orders. These are followed by the clergy of the Cathedral and the Monsignori of the Cathedral Chapter. The celebrant or Bishop brings up the end of the procession. This inverted order of precedence is an important organizational principle, which operates in the secular as well as the religious sphere, and it is one of the basic causes of disputes between villages and band clubs.

III

At present there are six political parties in Malta. Of these, only three contested the 1955 elections: the Nationalist Party (NP), led by Dr. Giorgio Borg Olivier; the Malta Labour Party (MLP), whose leader is Dom Mintoff; and Miss Mabel Strickland's Progressive Constitutional Party (PCP). The election resulted in 23 seats for the MLP, 17 for the NP and none for the PCP. Three new parties have emerged since the resignation from office of the MLP in 1958: the Democratic Nationalist Party (DNP), led by Dr. Herbert Ganado, split from the Nationalist Party; Anthony Pellegrini, a former Secretary of the Labour Party, founded the

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665 Christian Workers' Party (CWP); and Chev. George Ransley started up the Democratic Christian Party (DCP).

665 Of these six parties, only one, the Malta Labour Party, incor-
666 porates the villages on a permanent basis in its organizational framework. The other five parties are loosely organized. Their structure can be seen most clearly just before an election. At the top of each there is the party executive. Below that are the candidates from the electoral districts. (Under the 1947 Constitution there were eight electoral districts each returning five representatives; the 1961 Constitution increased the number to ten.) The candidates from the various electoral districts work out their campaign strategy with their national executives. Each candidate, in his turn, tries to appoint canvassers or agents in each important village in his district. Some canvassers are paid, and have represented other candidates and parties before. Thus at the village level it is pretty much every candidate for himself. This is particularly true when there are several candidates from a single party canvassing votes in the same village. If the party is successful, the chain from canvasser, through the local member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), to Cabinet Minister, serves as a channel for requests and patronage. The party structure is thus strengthened and given a degree of permanence. But if the party is defeated or, if elected, it resigns, or the constitution is suspended, it ceases to be an operative organization at the village level. None of these parties have permanently organized village committees or clubs, though there are Nationalist Party clubs in a few towns. In the past, a few band clubs became identified with specific parties and
[575] served as local centres for the party. This often occurred when prominent band club members became successful party politicians. But the linkage between a village band club and a particular party was coincidental. Moreover, only rarely did all the members of such a band club support the political party with which its leaders were aligned. The above, in rather general terms, is a rough description of the structure of five of the six Maltese political parties in 1961. The Labour Party is the exception.

665 The Labour Party was the first to reorganize itself immediately after the war. During the period between 1949 and 1955, when the Nationalists and Dr. Boffa's Workers' Party carried on a coalition government, Dom Mintoff further reorganized and strengthened the Malta Labour Party. Its structure was greatly

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reinforced during the three years following 1955 when it formed the government. Since then it has been streamlined and hardened by the Party's almost constant struggle with the Church. Frequent meetings now keep the rank and file in close touch with the national leaders. The Party's newspaper, which became a daily shortly after Mintoff resigned in 1958, disseminates propaganda and news of Labour activities as well as international news, and so provides the leaders with an important contact with members.

The MLP is now organized in three tiers: at the national level, at the level of the electoral district, and at the village level. The structure of the MLP, unlike that of its rivals, rests very firmly on its village level organization. Virtually every village in Malta has its own Local Committee, the members of which are elected annually by the formal, dues-paying members among the MLP supporters in the village. In most villages there is also a Party club, of which the Local Committee members are the officers. The Labour Club, which is usually equipped with a bar, a television set and a billiards table, serves as the social centre for the MLP group in the village. Its frequent activities keep the supporters united, as do the attacks of their enemies. The Club has become something of a refuge for MLP supporters who are now cut off from many village activities by the stigma which the Church has attached to them. A number of Local Committees have organized sub-committees for women and children.

Every Local Committee in each electoral district elects one member to sit on the District Committee. This Committee acts as a clearing house for propaganda and electoral tactics. During the three years that the Party formed the government, the District Committees were also points at which district-wide complaints, patronage and public works were discussed with the district MLA's.

At the apex of this pyramid is the National Executive of the Malta Labour Party. This is composed of representatives from all the District Committees, from the Parliamentary group and from the Labour League of Youth. The Party officers and additional members of the Executives are elected at an annual General Conference. All electoral candidates and major policy decisions are confirmed there. Conference delegates are representatives of the Local Committees of each village and town.

During the period the MLP was in power, the Local Committees

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665 were transformed from propaganda and social centres into instruments of government. As the village branches of the party in power, they represented government in the eyes of the people, if not the civil servants. They transmitted and explained the policy of the administration and they channelled requests to the appropriate authorities. Ministers made use of the Local Committees for business at the village level, since the Committees generally provided their only direct contact with the villages.

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IV

182 The State, the Church and the political parties are thus the national organizations which affect the lives of the people at the village level. The State is highly centralized, and has no political representatives in the villages. In contrast to the State, the Church has its official representatives in every village and hamlet. They are firmly controlled from above. The structure of the Malta Labour Party also rests firmly on its village level organization. The differing structural frameworks of these organizations have a direct bearing on this study. While competition for power at the national level between the State, on the one hand, and the Church or political parties, on the other, can often lead to bitter disputes, such conflict rarely causes division at the village level. In contrast, disputes at the national level between the political parties, or between a political party and the Church are transmitted immediately through their respective structures to the level of the village. There they bring about a conflict of interest which reflects the struggle for power at the national level.

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club and a sports club. In Farrug, for instance, there are two band clubs – one of which is dedicated to St. Martin, the other to St. Roque – a football club and an active Labour Party committee; while Kortin has a band club, a social club, a Labour club, a football club and a troop of Boy Scouts. The term secular, used in this context, requires a few words of qualification. Although clubs and associations which I have called secular do not form part of the Church, this does not necessarily mean that they are opposed to it, or are cut off from it. Quite the contrary. Almost every club has a chaplain who serves as a link between it and the parish priest. Most clubs take part in certain religious functions, especially during the week preceding Easter. Moreover, many of the clubs have dedicated themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by means of special religious ceremonies. Often this dedication is renewed annually. Only the clubs of the Malta Labour Party do not have any linkage with the Church.

The band clubs are the most important secular societies. They are formally constituted associations with elected committees, premises of their own and a large body of dues-paying members drawn from all occupational and social classes. The first band clubs were established shortly after the middle of the last century in order to organize the external celebrations and provide music for the annual festas of village patron saints. The clubs multiplied rapidly, and soon became civic and social centres. They have broadened their scope to include dramatic groups, reading rooms and places where members can gamble out of sight of the watchful eyes of the law. Most clubs have large concert halls that can be used for wedding receptions. Today, each club usually has a well-stocked bar, a television set and a billiards table.

But a band club is more than just a social centre. As it usually plays an important part in organizing the external celebration of the annual festa, the men who run the club make decisions which affect all the inhabitants. Furthermore, the club often represents the community to the outside world. Not only is the club's brass band considered as the village's band when it plays at other festas, but the club also provides a welcome to important visitors from outside. Thus when the Governor or the Archbishop makes an official visit, he normally calls on the band clubs, where he is given a reception on behalf of the entire village.

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575 The important officers of a band club are among the most influential people in the community, and are usually chosen from the village's leading citizens. The president is the figurehead of [574] the club. He greets distinguished visitors and handles many of the ceremonial and business relations the club has with other groups within and outside the community. He also presides over committee meetings and over the annual election of new officers. The day-to-day running of the club is in the hands of the secretary, who is registered with the police as the club's official representative. Much of the success of the club depends upon his ability to run its social activities and administrative affairs. Other important committee members are the vice-president, the treasurer and the bandmaster. The latter is very often an outsider who comes to the village only for the weekly rehearsal of the band.

575 554 Though the formal authority of the committee members extends over the members of the association only while they are in the club, their position in the club occasionally gives them a voice in decisions which affect the entire community. This, in turn, gives them a measure of authority over persons who are not members of the club.

575 184 But not all villages have band clubs. The small villages of Gharghur, Dingli and Safi have not been able to afford the luxury of their own bands; though each has a social club that performs much the same function as a social and civic centre. A few villages, such as Kortin, have both social clubs and band clubs. But there are neither band clubs nor social clubs in the Maltese villages of [517] Marsaskala, Marsaxlokk and Mġarr. In Gozo, only Rabat, Xewkija and Xaghra have band clubs. All the villages without clubs are fishing or agricultural communities. This may be because the men of these villages do not dispose of the leisure time in the evening necessary for a club to be a success: the farmers are too tired, and the fishermen are off tending their nets.

575 665 [526] [554] There are also political and football clubs in most Maltese villages. In Gozo there are a few football clubs, but no political clubs. These clubs are organized in much the same way as the band clubs, and corresponding office holders have similar functions and authority over their members. These offices, however, confer much less prestige. The football clubs, in particular, play only a small part in village affairs. The Malta Labour Party, as has already been noted, is the only political party which has clubs

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at the village level. While there are Labour committees in almost all villages in Malta, not all of them have been successful in finding club premises. Where clubs have not been opened, the active members usually meet in a café or a private house.

The role of the Labour committee or club in the social life of a village is rather complex. The Labour club at all times is the centre of the local Labour supporters. During the past few years it has also been the centre of agitation against the established authority of the Church, especially in so far as it touches on secular matters. During the three years following 1955 when the Labour Government was in office, these village committees were backed by the government. Committee members thus wielded considerable power, for they provided a direct link with the established authority of the State at the national level. The same was true, but to a lesser extent, of the agents of the Nationalist Party during its period in government.

V

The qualities which the Maltese themselves consider important for a person to have in order to hold office are, of course, ideal ones. As such, they may not all be present in the same person. The leader of the St. Roque Band Club in Farrug summed these up for me as responsibility, willingness to work, courage and social status (*pożizzjoni*). Responsibility and willingness to work are self-explanatory.

Courage is a necessary quality since any person in a position to exercise some control over the action of others (especially in a society which stresses equality) is bound to be criticized by those over whom he exercises it, as well as by those who envy his position. Courage may be based on a desire to acquire power, and insensitivity to or failure to perceive criticism, or on an idealism which places the ultimate ends above the criticism of the means employed to attain them. I have known various village leaders whose courage was based upon one or more of these attributes. I have also met people who resigned from their offices because their motivation or insensitivity was not sufficiently strong to prompt them to carry on in spite of criticism. A former secretary of the social club in Kortin once summed up the reasons for his resignation with the proverb, 'Unfortunate is the one who gets

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CHAPTER VI
Festa Partiti

578 Village unity is an ideal, and all villages try to present a tightly
621 united front to the outside world. In spite of this, all are divided internally by cleavages which cut across the community at various levels. Some of these divisions are only temporary, and disappear when the issues out of which they have arisen are resolved. Others, which may have arisen out of temporary issues, have for one reason or another become a permanent part of the social scene. But regardless of their origin or duration, these divisions are painfully real to the villagers. Persons made vulnerable through a network of personal relations are often forced to commit themselves to a particular division. In doing so, they become opposed to neighbours and kinsmen who are committed to the other side.
[602] This is one of the characteristics of life in all small villages. It is particularly true of communities, such as those in Malta, in which the inhabitants are closely related through kinship and affinity.

192 The Maltese call these divisions *partiti* (sing., *partit*). The term
578 thus corresponds not only to groups of the order which we in
621 English would call 'parties', but also to those to which we would apply the term 'factions'. Political parties are called partiti, and
[665] so are rival groups such as the two in Kortin which competed over
[794] the rebuilding of the church. Partiti are said to have *pika* between them. *Pika* denotes relations of competition, ill-feeling, hostility. There is little about the word which suggests the good-natured competition that can exist between rival school football or cricket teams. On the contrary, if there is *pika* between two groups, a no-holds-barred competition is expected. Partiti are thus considered to be a bad thing. They disrupt the harmony of the community and make it more difficult to project the ideal image of village unity to the outside world.

575 The oldest permanent division that exists in the villages is
578 between the supporters of rival band clubs. This division is related
621 to the cult of saints. In the previous chapter it was noted that
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578 621 79 Confraternity of St. Roque. Unfortunately, at this point, it is not possible to distinguish fact from myth. The tales are accepted as reality, and so help to formulate the attitude of St. Martin supporters toward their rivals. However, when the old priest died, it was discovered that most of the festal finery of the parish church had been purchased in the name of the Confraternity of St. Roque. St. Martin supporters were in the humiliating position of having to beg their rivals for the use of the church valuables in order to decorate the church for the feast of the parish patron. Moreover, while the old priest had controlled the celebration of St. Martin, he had allowed the lay leaders of the St. Roque partit a free hand in planning their feast.

578 621 665 At this time the St. Martin club was split over national politics, and a faction composed of Strickland supporters left and founded a new club. Though both clubs remained loyal to St. Martin, there was trouble between them. Older St. Roque partisans recount with amusement how a report to the police by the secretary of the parent club resulted in twenty members of the new club being arrested and fined for gambling. But the hostility between these two factions declined when Strickland made his peace with the Church, and in 1934 they reunited.

578 621 783 784 The burden of redressing the balance between the partiti fell upon the old priest's successor, and upon those who followed him. There were many incidents between these priests and the St. Roque partit, and on several occasions the former had to send for police protection. In spite of the 1935 regulations, the St. Roque partit retained its numerical superiority as well as the church decorations during the 'thirties. It was not until 1942 that a shrewd parish priest succeeded in bringing the silver altar front out of the St. Roque strongroom into that of the parish church, where it has remained ever since.

The rivalry between the partiti lay dormant during the Second World War, as the people united to fight for survival. But it flared up again immediately after the war, as did similar rivalry in other villages. Both clubs organized musical bands for the first time. After a series of incidents which culminated in the parish priest again having to send for police protection, this time against angry St. Martin supporters, the rivalry began to decline somewhat. This decline was brought about chiefly by the effects of emigration, improvements in local transport, the establishment of a number

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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of new associations in the village and the increased activity of political parties.

During the mid-'fifties emigration drained away many of the most active supporters of the partiti. In 1954 alone, no fewer than two dozen men between 18 and 38 left the village for Australia and Canada. Each club lost key bandsmen, and the two bands, already heavily bolstered with outside players, never recovered. A constantly improving bus service enabled young men to go to the 'talkies' in other villages, or just stroll up and down Kingsway in Valletta – a very popular pastime with young people from all over Malta – instead of spending the evening in their village clubs. During this period the Football Club, MUSEUM and Catholic Action were established in the village and began to draw potential partit leaders into other spheres of activity. The Football Club was particularly damaging in this respect. As a neutral social club it provided a place where the young men of the two partiti, who normally never entered one another's clubs, could meet. A number of friendships developed between them, and it soon became the most popular club in the village. Finally, the increased activity of the national political parties during the elections in 1950, 1951, 1953 and 1955 drew the attention of the villagers away from purely parochial concerns and bound them up in rivalries of a different order, which often cut across traditional allegiances. This created factions within the clubs and weakened the partiti.

Rivalry flared up again in 1960, when the supporters of St. Martin, intent upon celebrating the centenary of their patron, staged the greatest festa in the history of the village. But the political and religious fervour of the 1961 election campaign soon captured the attention of the partisans, and the festa of the following year was a pale shadow of the gala spectacle of the year before.

Before proceeding any further, we must unravel the rather complicated tangle of partit, club and confraternity. All festa partiti are composed of three groups: (i) the band club, which provides the leadership of the partit and includes most of the active male supporters, many of whom are also members of (ii) the confra...nity allied with the partit or dedicated to its patron, and (iii) the rank and file of men, women and children who are members neither of the confraternity nor of the club, but still support the partit against its rival. The central strand running through all

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residence pattern is certainly true in Farrug, and I observed much the same thing in other villages divided by festa partiti. In Farrug, 65 per cent of the people living on the main square and the four streets leading into it supported St. Martin, but only 46 per cent of those living in other parts of the village did so.

Disputes between partiti usually concern matters of precedence or their ability to display devotion to their saints. Each partit has certain rights, usually secured at the cost of clashes with its rival. These include the position and participation of the club and confraternity in Church processions and at other functions, the routes over which these processions travel and the possession of certain property and its display in the parish church. Any attempt to extend or reduce them is resisted by the partit affected, which takes action to protect its interests by trying to influence the Church authorities, who must make the final decisions.

The structural position of a partit determines the kind of pressure that it can bring to bear upon the Church. Those of titular saints are, in a sense, the establishment parties. As we have seen, the Church seeks to build up their celebrations at the expense of the secondary ones. Hence a titular partit can negotiate from a strong position: its ultimate sanction is refusal to participate in the feast of the village patron, an event which the Church is anxious to see celebrated with great pomp. Secondary partiti, on the other hand, are inherently opposed to the Church in matters of festa policy. They try to increase the scale of their feasts, while the Church tries to reduce them. They dare not cancel their feasts for fear that the Church would accuse them of making trouble and suppress them, as it did the secondary festas of Our Lady of Lourdes in Qrendi, and St. Michael in Żabbar.

Their position in opposition to Church policy has given most secondary partiti a certain *esprit de corps* and unity of purpose that their rivals often lack. This has made them better able to withstand the divisive effects of the political factions which have recently weakened many of their rivals. It has also generally resulted in the emergence of stronger leaders. Secondary partiti are often united around a single professional class leader who can not only hold the partit together in the face of the attacks of its opponents, but can also argue intricate points of Canon Law with the monsignori at the Curia and, at times, with the Archbishop himself. As we have observed, the secondary partiti generally have

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CHAPTER VII

National Politics and the Village

In the last few years issues of national policy have taken an increasingly important place in the villages alongside the purely parochial ones we discussed in the preceding two chapters. Divisions based on opposed political ideologies are now reflected in the groups and associations in which people spend their time. The major division which cuts across all Maltese villages is based not so much upon rivalry between political parties, as upon the present conflict between the Malta Labour Party and the Church. But as has been observed, conflict between the Church and a political party is not new to Malta. It also existed during the late 'twenties and early 'thirties.

The dispute between the Labour Party and the Church is essentially a struggle for power. Dom Mintoff, the Labour leader, accuses the Archbishop Gonzi of siding with Britain to maintain Malta's colonial status, and with interfering in politics by attacking the Labour Party and its leaders. In its 1962 Electoral Manifesto the MLP proclaims the right of a person 'to fulfil his civic duty without pseudo-religious interference'; sees as a crime 'any interference with the right of a democratically elected majority to implement the people's mandate', and advocates the 'abolition of medieval privileges which have retarded [the country's] social and economic progress.'[1] The Church sees this not only as a direct attack on the basic right and duty of a bishop to teach and to guard the morals of his flock,[2] but also as a move to destroy its traditional position in Maltese society. In particular it fears that if the Labour Party were returned to power, it would enact legislation which would render the Archbishop liable to prosecution before the criminal court if he were to comment on the political issues of the day.

These opposing views are expressed in the slogans written on

[1] See Appendix B for the 1962 MLP Electoral Manifesto.
[2] Cf. William E. Addis and others, '*Bishop*', *A Catholic Dictionary*, pp. 80 ff.

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8. Labour Party supporters cheer Dom Mintoff

[facing p. 97]

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208 578 665 795 walls and shouted at public meetings. Mintoff is portrayed as a Socialist devil working to give the islands over to Communism in the manner of Cuba's Castro. These are some typical examples of the ones that appeared on the blackboard outside the Kortin Catholic Action centre: 'Mintoff is the enemy of the Church', 'Nobody can serve both God and the Devil', '"The Bishops are interfering in politics!" That is what Communists say,' and 'We don't want Communists among us!' In stating their case, Mintoff and his supporters did not mince words either, as the following slogans that appeared on the blackboard of the Kortin Labour Party club demonstrate: 'We want a chance in court about the $60,000 lie',[1] 'With the Papal flag in their hands and shouting for vengeance', 'A fish begins to stink from its head',[2] and 'In Gozo they told the women that we have tails.'

208 578 665 794 795 The popular slogan 'Either with the Bishop or against the Church!' sums up the uncompromising attitude of the Church. Most of the sanctions it has imposed have presented that choice to the people in unequivocal terms. Early in May 1961, shortly after the Labour leaders were interdicted, all Church lay societies were instructed to obtain from each member a pledge of his full and unqualified support for the Archbishop. Those that declined to give this were expelled from the society concerned and their names reported to the national office of Catholic Action. But a more drastic sanction was imposed a few weeks later. After the [783] [626] Executive of the Labour Party had invited the Archbishop and the Bishop of Gozo to debate their policy in public at a Labour rally in Cospicua, the Bishops replied to this insult by issuing a circular which declared it a mortal sin to print, write for, sell, buy, distribute or read the Labour Party newspapers. All confessors were instructed to put the necessary questions to their penitents.

578 665 794 795 [851] [608] Hence, to remain a Labour supporter, a person has to forego the Church sacraments that he has been brought up to believe vital to his happiness and spiritual salvation. This is a very serious choice for a practising Catholic, and before these sanctions were imposed, the Maltese were among the most devoutly Catholic people in the world. It has also meant that MLP supporters cannot

[1] This refers to the Archbishop's charge, made at a rally in March 1961, that Mintoff had received $61,000 from the allegedly Communist dominated Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization, which the MLP had just joined.

[539] [2] A Maltese proverb meaning that corruption first becomes apparent among people in high places. This was presumably directed against the Archbishop.

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act as godparents. For this reason a number of people, prevented from inviting relatives and friends to fill this office, have preferred not to baptize their children.

Many have bowed to the authority of the Church and have stopped supporting the Labour Party. But in spite of everything that has been preached on the subject, many others still feel that there is nothing incompatible between support of their political leader and loyalty to their religion. This view is expressed in the slogan which is displayed so often at MLP rallies that it has become almost a party motto: 'With Mintoff always, against the Church never.' Although they are told from the pulpit that it does them no good, most members of the Labour Party continue to attend the daily or weekly services of worship that they have been going to since childhood. Besides, many have rationalized their action by saying that the Archbishop of Malta is acting for personal and political motives; as long as the Pope himself does not condemn the MLP they will continue to support it. This attitude is reinforced by the experience of some Labour supporters who have been absolved while on holiday or on duty with the military services in countries where it is possible to be a Socialist and a practising Catholic at the same time.

As a result of these sanctions many have turned their backs on the Church and no longer attend religious services. Before this struggle between the MLP and the Church, it would have been unthinkable for anyone in a small village to stay away from church. A civil servant in one village told me that he had been a confirmed atheist for years. Yet until this past year he had gone to church every Sunday. In his words, 'People make it very difficult for someone who does not go to church, and I have to live here all my life. Besides, I might lose my job if people complained about me.' But he is now an open supporter of the Labour Party and no longer feels obliged to go to church. To some extent, then, the sanctions of the Church have created a social role for the non-practising Catholic.

The attitude of many who support the Labour Party is summed up in the words of a twenty-year-old bus conductor in Kortin. We were sitting around a table in a small wine shop when I asked him why he supported the MLP in spite of the opposition of the Church to it and the fact that Mintoff was regarded as a Communist by so many in the village. He replied in English, 'I am

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young, I cannot even vote in the next election. But I must think of the future. I feel that Mintoff is doing what is right for Malta. He helped the poor people when he made the government. The Church fights Mintoff because she fears she will lose her privileges and power if he wins, and that he will tax her property. The Church is in favour of keeping people ignorant, and limiting their education. Why? Because when people are educated they think for themselves and can judge. They no longer follow blindly. Besides, you should not take too seriously all this talk of Communism – they are products of this fight. In a fight, people use all means available.'

The street sweeper who was with us understood most of the conversation and shook his head in disagreement. His only comment was the proverb, 'A ship with two captains can't sail' (*Il-vapur biż-żewġ kaptani ma jimxiex*). At this every one in the shop nodded in agreement, for both Labour and Church supporters had different captains in mind. Those who support the Archbishop look to him as the leader of the Maltese people. They make little distinction between Church and State. Labour supporters, in contrast, make a clear distinction. Mintoff is their candidate for head of State, and since they see the Archbishop as interfering with their choice, they accuse him of reaching out to control both Church and State.

II

At the village level, this conflict has brought about a bitter division. All societies and groups which are not formally identified with one side or the other, have been divided and weakened by politically based factions. The parish priest is the leader of those who support the Archbishop. His most enthusiastic followers are the clergy and the members of the lay societies. This group, with the other prominent villagers who make up the parish priest's circle, provide the hard core of the active opposition to the MLP. Considering the offices that they occupy and the societies to which they belong, it could hardly be otherwise. They usually meet in the club houses of the societies, but sometimes the older members meet in a particular café.

The hard core of the Labour group is made up of the officers of the local MLP Committee and the members who openly frequent the club. There is very little contact between the leaders and

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active members of the two sides. But there are a number of persons who would like to avoid having to make a break with either side. For the most part they keep quiet about their political views. But the Church sanctions and the pressure exerted by relatives, friends and workmates is slowly reducing their numbers.

Affiliation is expressed in very much the same way as with the festa partiti. That is, supporters participate in their side's activities and boycott those of their opponents. The activities of those who support the Archbishop centre on the lay apostolate societies. The leaders of these groups, with the parish priest, usually organize the buses that take villagers to the rallies of the Diocesan Junta, which are usually held in front of the Floriana parish church. More recently, separate parishes have organized rallies and pilgrimages of reparation a few days after the Labour Party has held a meeting in the village. An official visit of the Archbishop to a village also provides an occasion for a big demonstration by his supporters in his honour. Bus-loads of colleagues from other parishes often swell the ranks of the local lay societies during their demonstrations. They in turn attend similar meetings in other parishes. Occasionally they unite and act in opposition to MLP meetings in their own and other parishes. More often though, they organize picnics or pilgrimages to take supporters out of the village when their opponents have arranged an event. Supporters of the Archbishop show their allegiance by decorating their houses with pictures of him and with yellow and white Papal flags. Many also buy the newspapers of Catholic Action and the Young Christian Workers.

Enthusiasm for the struggle, which had assumed something of the character of a Holy War when I left Malta, has gripped both young and old. For example, at an MLP meeting in Birkirkara in May 1961 I saw a black-cowled MUSEUM woman herding a group of youngsters up against a police cordon. All were blowing whistles as loudly as they could. A little later a scuffle broke out between MLP supporters and organized parties from the lay religious societies who had surrounded the meeting. But a police water cannon promptly dampened their enthusiasm. In another village, opponents of the MLP rang the bells of the parish church to drown out the Labour voices. This technique, in fact, was first used in Gozo at a big MLP rally there in April, where it proved so successful that not one of the speakers was able to make himself

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heard. The meeting was finally called off, and the large MLP delegation from Malta was literally routed. They had to return on foot from Rabat to the ferry, as the bus drivers refused them transport. During the long walk to the ferry, the Labour partisans were ambushed and rather badly mauled by groups of men, women and children from all over Gozo. The ardour of many Gozitans had been worked up by lay leaders who toured the villages for several days beforehand. But besides their religious fervour, there was a considerable element of parochial pride, and the feeling that 'we'll show these Maltese invaders a thing or two.' In all, forty persons were reported injured. The Gozitans were extremely proud of their victory, and the local branch of the Social Action Movement published a booklet to commemorate the occasion.[1]

The activity of Labour supporters centres on their local Party club or committee, which arranges for transportation to national MLP rallies and conducts lectures and classes on the political aims of the Party. It also organizes social evenings and outings for Labour supporters. The members of the Local Committee take charge of the preparations for national meetings held in their own village. Local Committees take the initiative in preparing floats, decorated carts and companies in costume for the annual MLP demonstration on the First of May. For the past few years the MLP Executive has also organized a carnival celebration for its supporters to induce them to boycott the official government-sponsored carnival.[2] Labour supporters read the Labour daily newspaper, *Il-Helsien* (Freedom), and the Sunday *Voice of Malta*. Since the condemnation, *Il-Helsien* has become a party badge. It is pasted on bus windows during MLP excursions, worn as an armband at rallies and in general used by Labour supporters to taunt their opponents. I have even seen some young men in Kortin swagger into church on Sunday morning with copies of it sticking out of their hip pockets.

All supporters of the Labour Party do not show their allegiance this openly, for many wish to avoid the break with a large section of the community which would follow such action. Some are teachers or civil servants who fear lest their open support for the

[1] *Ghawdex Jiddefendi L-Knisja* [Gozo defends the Church] (Gozo: Social Action Movement, 1961).

[2] The government at this time was administered by a British Chief Secretary, and the MLP ordered members to stay away from all events it organized.

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MLP cost them their jobs.[1] Others have friends or relatives on the other side with whom they do not wish to break. Yet others, responsible for maintaining the unity of a neutral club, fear that an open stand will bring about a crisis which would divide it. Although most of these persons continue to read the condemned papers, they do so discreetly, for reading them openly would provoke incidents. There are also a large number of Labour sympathizers who have been unwilling to forego the sacraments of the Church. They no longer read the Labour papers or attend MLP rallies, but they are bitter about having been forced to make the choice.

The physical act of purchasing a Labour newspaper has in itself become a public statement of political allegiance. After the condemnation and the threat of a general Church boycott of their premises (which was carried out in Gozo) most vendors have refused to handle MLP publications. In the villages they can usually only be bought at the local MLP club. Thus the act of striding across the village square and into the stronghold of the devil, performed in front of many of the village elders, becomes an open declaration of sympathy with the Labour cause. In Kortin many wait until the square is empty, usually around midnight in the summer, and then scuttle into the club to get their papers.

III

There is a correlation between occupational class and support for one of these two ideological divisions. In general, professionals, white-collar workers and farmers support the Archbishop, and industrial labourers the Labour Party. There are several reasons for this. To begin with, the Labour Party is a working-man's party, and there is ideological support for it on that account. Although the MLP has a definitely socialist ideology, and is a member of the Socialist International (points on which the Church attacks it regularly), it advocates few of the measures associated with doctrinaire Socialism, such as public ownership of transport and industry or the collectivization of farming. On the other hand, it does promise equal opportunity for all, and 'the right of the

[1] The Malta Government Circular of 19 October 1960 prohibited most grades of civil servants from holding office in political organizations or publicly expressing their political views. This regulation is something of a paradox in a small country in which most intellectuals work for the government in one capacity or another.

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people to have the final say in the nation's vital means of production."[1] These policies have a general appeal to labourers and are among the reasons for the party's popularity.

The Labour Party is closer to the worker than any of the other political parties. In this respect, its organization resembles that of the Church. As already noted, the MLP rests on its village and district organization. This has enabled the average worker to have a say of sorts, not only in his party's policy, but, when it was in power, also in the affairs of government. How he and his neighbours were able to manipulate the party structure to their advantage is a matter which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

During its period in office the Labour Party did much to improve conditions for the workers and the poor. This is another reason why many support it. It introduced many social benefits, including the extension of medical services, regular allotments of free food and social assistance allowances for the needy and aged. It also built many new schools, surfaced dusty roads and undertook other large public works projects which gave employment to many, besides benefiting the community. Moreover, the party did a great deal to improve agriculture by bringing in foreign experts who set up an advisory service and introduced new crops and techniques of cultivation. All these and the general atmosphere of activity which permeated the Labour Government, gained great popularity for the party and its leader.

There is yet another important way in which the MLP attracts many: it has attacked the established authority of Britain, the Church, the local captains of industry and the prosperous members of society. This outlook appeals not only to many poor and underprivileged persons, but also to the young and the uninfluential who are seeking to establish their personal independence and to make their mark on society. This opposition to authority and vested interests holds an attraction for many social 'misfits', such as the young 'Teddy Boy' element, the eccentrics and free thinkers. These find in the MLP a haven for their nonconformity to the social and moral teaching of the Church. Though social and religious stigma still attaches to them, many find it easier to bear in the company of others who have similar beliefs and problems. The Labour Party has thus provided social outcasts with a sense of

[1] MLP manifesto. See Appendix B.

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'belonging', and to a certain extent has created for them a community of their own. These persons often make up the hard core of Labour supporters in their villages, since they have nothing to lose by openly fighting the Church.

A number of sociological explanations can be advanced to account for the support professionals, white-collar workers and farmers give to the Church. First of all, professionals generally lose status in the eyes of their colleagues, if not the wider society, if they join the Labour Party or sympathize with it. It is a working-class party, and they are professionals. There are a number of notable exceptions to this, but the only professionals that I met who sympathized with the MLP were either candidates for office with it or members of the Executive. The political ideology of their colleagues and the expectations of their clients combine to make them look upon the Labour Party as the antithesis of everything they have been brought up to believe in. They, through their offices in parish associations and through their work as doctors, lawyers, high civil servants, and so on, form part of the establishment to which the Labour Party is opposed.

Much the same reasoning can be applied to the white-collar workers. As teachers, clerks and other intermediate grade civil servants they hold a relatively high position in the social hierarchy of their villages. Many are anxious to identify themselves with their social superiors, those in control of the village as well as their employers, and thus look down upon the MLP as opposed to their interests. Moreover most of them have been educated at colleges run by the Church. There their teachers gave them additional religious instruction and strengthened those values which make the anti-clerical tone of the Labour Party repugnant to them.

Farmers, on the other hand, are looked down upon by many and are regarded as underprivileged by all. Why is it then that they do not support the Labour Party? Farmers in most communities are very conservative, and those in Malta are no exception. Their solitary occupation isolates them from the Labour Party ideology which is so freely discussed among the industrial workers of Malta. Not only that, but as we have seen, they are among the most poorly educated section of the community. Many are unable to read the propaganda which the MLP disseminates through its publications. This isolation from the secular and materialistic ideologies which enter the country through the

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463 467 665 Grand Harbour and first establish themselves in the conurbation surrounding it has helped to keep the farmer devoutly tied to the Church. For this reason the action of the MLP in challenging the authority of the Bishops is as abhorrent to him as it is difficult to understand.

463 578 665 795 [626] The recent sanctions of the Church have increased the class alignment of those who support the Labour Party and those who oppose it. This is largely because those with high social status have more to lose than industrial workers, and are thus more vulnerable to the pressure of public opinion and the Church. The increasingly heavy pressure of the Church has forced many of the young professionals and intellectuals to abandon the party for which they voted in 1955. But even when the MLP was in office, its policies began to alarm many in the professional and middle classes. They objected not only to Mintoff's attitude to the Church, but also to the somewhat abrupt way his government occasionally dealt with the professional and business communities. Many were disturbed by the MLP's rather sudden switch from advocating integration with Britain to demanding complete independence. As most of those who left the party or became inactive in it were moderates, both in their approach to the Church and to the economic and political problems facing Malta, the MLP has become more extreme in its outlook. This in turn induced others to leave it. This process was accelerated by the [656] regulations which prohibited the better-educated civil servants from taking an active part in the political life of their country.

463 665 666 Table 7 below shows the rough correlation between occupational class and support of the Malta Labour Party. In particular, it demonstrates that as the proportion of skilled workers decreases, so does the proportion of voters who support Labour. Other variables are the number of professionals and farmers. The Second and Fourth Electoral Districts polled the highest number of Labour votes in the 1962 election, and the Sixth and Tenth the lowest. The MLP polled 56 per cent of the total votes in the Second Electoral District, where 45 per cent of the working population are classified as skilled labourers.

In contrast, it received only 6 per cent of the votes in Gozo, where only 16 per cent of the people are skilled labourers, but 38 per cent are engaged in agriculture. Another important variable is the number of clergy resident in a district. The relatively high

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proportion of clerics and nuns in the Sixth Electoral District helps to explain the relatively low Labour poll there. It is also a significant factor in explaining the overwhelming defeat of the MLP in Gozo. These two districts have the highest proportion of clerics in the country. The Fourth District, in contrast, has the lowest.

TABLE 7. 1962 Elections:
Occupational Class and Voting Behaviour[1]

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS[2]	SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES (As percentage of total lab. force)			PERCENTAGE LABOUR VOTES
	Professional[3]	*Skilled*	*Agricultural*	
IInd (Senglea, etc.)	4 (3)	45	4	56
IVth (Żurrieq, etc.)	3 (2)	34	11	47
VIth (Birkirkara, etc.)	6 (4)	33	11	24
Xth (Gozo)	7 (6)	16	38	6
All Districts	5 (3)	32	11	34

IV

It will have been observed that there is a certain superficial similarity between the reasons given here for belonging to the MLP and those suggested in the preceding chapter for recruitment into the secondary festa partiti. One might expect therefore that in comparison with titular partiti, secondary partiti would have a higher proportion of Labour supporters among their members. Unfortunately, owing to the disturbed political situation prevailing at the time, I was not able to gather satisfactory systematic data on this point. Almost all informants with whom I discussed the matter suggested that secondary partiti did in fact have more pro-Mintoff members than their rivals. But the situation is not quite as straightforward as it might appear. To begin with, the statements of informants varied according to their own political beliefs and their position in relation to the festa partiti. Rivals generally tried to place each other in an unfavourable light. Thus an anti-MLP member of a band club supporting a titular feast

[1] Source: *1957 Census: Report on Economic Activities*, pp. 40–111; and *The Malta Government Gazette* (3 March 1962), pp. 585–94.

[2] *IInd* (Cospicua, Senglea, Vittoriosa, Kalkara, Żabbar, M'skala), *IVth* (Żurrieq, Safi, Qrendi, Mqabba, Kirkop, B'bugia, Żejtun, M'xlokk), *VIth* (Birkirkara, Balzan, Lija, Attard, Naxxar, Gharghur).

[3] Percentage of priests, monks and nuns in parenthesis.

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575 578 621 665 would describe the rival club as a Mintoff stronghold, but suggested that his own club had relatively few MLP members. In contrast, a member of the rival club with the same political view would often say just the opposite. Parish priests generally gave very conservative estimates of the number of MLP supporters in the clubs, but usually said that the secondary clubs had more.

621 665 [464] Another factor which makes it difficult to be dogmatic about the political alignment of the partiti is that most are located in the southern villages. These communities are reservoirs of industrial labour and are generally strongly pro-Labour. For this reason, unbiased informants generally estimated that Labour supporters made up between half and three-fourths of the membership of all clubs, but that secondary clubs had slightly more. My own experience in Farrug confirms this. I found there that about 70 per cent of the members of each partit are pro-Labour, although the leaders of the village MLP group are almost all from the St. Martin partit. This I suggested was due more to the shallowness of the leadership resources of the St. Roque partit than to the political inclination of its members.

575 621 665 At the policy level, all clubs usually maintain strict political neutrality. At least, all incorporate clauses to this effect in their by-laws, and many prohibit party newspapers and political discussions in the club. Nonetheless, some clubs are closely identified with a particular political party. Of the clubs that are aligned in this way, those that celebrate the titular feasts generally support one of the parties allied with the Church, usually the Nationalist Party; their rivals support the Labour Party. This alignment often comes about when a leading member of a club seeks political office. Where this occurs, members of the opposite festa partit, as a matter of course, give their votes to his chief opponent in another party, or to a rival in his own party. The political significance of the rivalry between festa partiti will be examined in the following chapter, together with some of the ways in which political candidates manipulate the partiti, and are, in their turn, manipulated by them.

But the tendency to political polarity of rival band clubs still does not explain why the leader of a secondary club, for example, supports the Labour Party, and not one of the rival parties. The chief reason for this, quite apart from the fact that he may have a personal preference for the party, is that the members of his own

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festa partit form the nucleus of his political following. It is not surprising therefore that he should support the party they favour.

There is another interesting way in which festa partiti in general, and secondary partiti in particular, are related to support for the Labour Party. In all villages divided by these partiti, people have become conditioned to opposing the authority of the Church in connection with matters dealing with the celebration of feasts. This, I suggest, has enabled them to accept the anti-clerical outlook of the Labour Party more easily than the people of villages not so divided. An old stone-cutter in Kortin, who was procurator of one of the small chapels in the village, once unconsciously pointed to the structural similarity of the MLP and secondary festa partiti. We were discussing the resemblance of the Strickland crisis of thirty years ago to the present political dispute, when he pointed to the parish church and remarked, 'I've always been against them. I was for Strickland. I'm for Mintoff, and if we had partiti here, I would support the secondary feast.' There is, of course, a difference between the opposition of a secondary partit and that of the MLP. Nonetheless, both oppose the authority of the Church and both resort to attacks on the clergy to drive home their points of view. This is anti-clericalism. Both the festa partiti and the Labour Party make a distinction between the person and the office of the cleric they attack, and they appear to attack the former rather than the latter. But repeated attacks upon the person holding an office may weaken the office itself. Thus prolonged anti-clericalism can lead to anti-religious sentiment, or at least prepare the way for it. This, I feel, has happened in the case of the festa partiti.

In challenging the decisions of the Church relating to matters of festa policy a festa partisan often resorts to violence. He frightens the priest with home-made bombs to show his displeasure, to try and change the decision and even to compel him to leave the village. But he never attacks the ultimate right of the Church or its ministers to make those decisions. Indeed, some friends in Farrug were quite shocked when I suggested that they were doing just this. On the other hand, this constant rebellion against the authority of the Church has accustomed people to being at odds for long periods with their parish priests as well as with the Archbishop. During these times, they often ignore what the Church has to say if it does not agree with the point of view they

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578 hold. This is the accepted pattern of behaviour, not only in
621 villages divided by festa partiti, but also in others which have dis-
79 putes with the Church. But it is only in the villages with festa partiti that these disputes, and the related anti-clerical action, take place on a regularly recurring basis. In these villages, though people are devout in observing many details of their religion, constant opposition to the parish priest in matters connected with festas has led them to look upon a measure of anti-clericalism as part of their way of life.

578 The relative lack of respect for the clergy in these villages has
621 been partly responsible for a rather high turnover of parish
554 priests. It has been shown how uncomfortable festa partiti can
793 make the life of a parish priest. This, plus the meagre living in the smaller parishes, prompts priests to look for openings in wealthier and less troublesome villages. The Church itself regards the small rural parishes as training or 'stepping-stone parishes', as a monsignor from the Curia once described them to me. But even as such, they are unpopular, and the Archbishop often has difficulty finding priests willing to take charge of them. Farrug, for example, has had six parish priests since 1953. The lack of continuity of Church leadership in these small, divided villages has tended to weaken its influence there and to foster a lack of respect for its authority.

578 In this social climate the anti-clericalism of the Labour Party
621 fits without great difficulty. Labour supporters have already had
665 experience as festa partisans in ignoring the commands of the
795 Church, and in enduring the taunts and disapproval of their rivals in the other partit. For them anti-clericalism is nothing new, and
[626] they are thus not as vulnerable to public opinion and the sanctions of the Church as persons in villages which do not have this tradition of opposition to the Church.

But if there is a certain similarity between the anti-clerical behaviour of many festa enthusiasts and that of MLP supporters, most persons make a distinction between the two. The anti-clerical actions of the festa partiti are usually directed against particular clerics in connection with specific decisions. In contrast, the anti-clericalism of the Labour Party is directed at the Archbishop in particular and often at all priests in general. This difference stems from the fact that basically their challenge to the authority of the Church differs significantly. Where the festa partisan does

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not rationalize the distinction he makes between the person and the office of the cleric he attacks, though his behaviour shows that he does make one, the Labour supporter often proclaims that he makes such a distinction, when in fact he does not. The MLP not only challenges the statements of the Archbishop which apply to the political scene, but often questions his right to make them. This explains the difference in the reaction of the Church to the two forms of anti-clericalism.

I have suggested that the one prepares the way for the other. The rebellious atmosphere created by the disputes between the festa partiti is, I believe, as important a factor as occupational class in explaining the relatively high degree of open support the Labour Party has in the southern villages. The extent of this support, especially in the smaller villages, in spite of the sanctions of the Church, came as a surprise to some of the leaders of the MLP, who had always thought of them as dominated by their parish priests, like the small villages in Gozo. But in the spring of 1961, the small villages of Kirkop, Dingli and Gudja were placed first, second and third in an MLP competition to find the community which had the greatest proportion of new Party members. I suggest that the support for the MLP in these three villages is due not so much to their proportion of industrial labourers, which in any case is not particularly high (23, 20 and 35 per cent respectively),[1] as to their strong tradition of rebellion against the authority of the Church. Kirkop and Gudja both have active festa partiti of long standing, and while Dingli has no festa partiti now, the village has a long history of opposition to its parish priests. For example, shortly after the First World War, the Dingli Social Club had an argument with the parish priest, and for many years after, members celebrated the national feast on 8 September, instead of the patronal feast of the Assumption, simply to annoy him.

V

But whatever complex and diverse reasons people have for taking sides, the division has given rise to conflict in most villages. In this respect Kortin is no different, as the slogans displayed during the battle of the blackboards indicated. The division has cut right

[1] *1957 Census: Report on Economic Activities*, pp. 41–2.

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178 across the village and the clubs, and has brought about conflict
578 within many families. People lament the change that has come
621 over the village as a result. An old bachelor friend often used to complain that had we come to live there just a few years ago, 'before politics came and spoiled everything', we would have found the village a far happier place. Picnics and outings were more frequent then, and groups of friends used to gather on hot summer evenings and stroll outside the village to play guitars and sing the lilting Maltese *ghana* in the cool air away from the houses. [575] There was also more life in the clubs. Both the Social Club and [796] the Band Club used to take part in the national carnival competition for the best decorated carts and costumed companies. But as the political conflict has divided the island's carnival celebration in two, so it has also affected the clubs. They now celebrate neither the government's carnival nor that of the MLP for fear the question of which one to participate in would provoke a fight that would cripple the club.

578 Dun Bert, the parish priest in Kortin, is of course the head of
665 the local group which supports the Archbishop and opposes the
793 MLP. His chief lieutenants in the fight are the local clergy and the
794 lay leaders of the religious associations. Pawlu and Anton, his two faithful helpers, are also vocal partisans, as is old Manwel. Dr. Farrugia, old Manwel's son, as a former member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and a leading member of one of the political parties opposed to the MLP, also belongs to the pro-Church division in the village, though he takes little part in its day-to-day affairs. The main activity and support comes from the leaders of
275 the lay associations, especially of the Young Christian Workers,
578 the MUSEUM and the Sodality of Our Lady. These all meet regu-
665 larly in their respective premises. Many of the others, older men,
794 spend much of their free time in Kelinu's café. These include old Manwel, Pawlu, Anton, the sacristan, the organist, and Dun Mikiel and Dun Filip, respectively the chaplains of the female and male sections of Catholic Action. This café, located right next to Dr. Farrugia's house, is the nicest café on the square, or in the village for that matter. It is the only one which the clergy, the teachers and occasionally Dr. Farrugia himself, frequent. It is thus the headquarters of the more influential village citizens who support the Archbishop. Most MLP supporters have stopped going to [517] it, although a few still play cards there for an hour or so in the late afternoon when they return from work.

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afternoon when they return from work. Many Labour sympathizers believe that the important anti-Labour demonstrations and moves are plotted at Kelinu's.

The headquarters of the MLP group is the Labour Club, which is situated just off the square and around the corner from Kelinu's. Salvu, the ex-MLA who is the leader of the village Labour group, spends his evenings there with his lieutenants, the officers of the village Labour Committee. Salvu, a small building contractor, has had little formal education, but he has an engaging personality, a quick mind and is a persuasive speaker. He is also an excellent comic actor, a playwright of sorts, and the author of most of the slogans that appear on the club's blackboard. Smaller groups of Labour supporters meet at one of the other cafés on the square, and at some of the wine shops near the chapel of St. Paul in the poorer section of the village. Other groups of pro-Labour friends often gather on the steps of the church or around a bench near the Labour club. They rarely go into the club itself, for all are anxious to avoid being marked as open Labour supporters by the village, which, generally speaking, is strongly anti-Labour.

The supporters of the Archbishop and those of the Labour Party rarely meet face to face as organized bodies. When they do, it is the occasion for a good deal of ill-feeling and, sometimes, open hostility. This occurs when a big rally is organized in the village. Two such rallies were held in Kortin while we were living there. The first was on the occasion of a visit of the Archbishop; the second was a national MLP meeting. Dun Bert and his assistants organized a huge demonstration in honour of the Archbishop during his visit. It was a great success. The Labour club arranged a social and musical gathering the evening before to work up Party solidarity, but it closed its doors during the actual visit and cleaned off its blackboard in order not to provoke incidents. With but one exception, there were no incidents to spoil the enthusiastic welcome the villagers accorded the Archbishop. Many Labour supporters attended the demonstration, for the Archbishop was visiting the village as head of the Church in Malta to bestow the sacrament of confirmation on the children. But as the Archbishop and his excited escort approached the church, a bitter Labour supporter made an insulting gesture at him. (People were quick to inform us that the man was an outsider married into the village.) He was subsequently arrested and convicted, for as

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already noted, in Malta, it is a criminal offence to insult a minister of religion. There were no other disturbances.

The Labour rally was rather a different story. The leader of the MLP and the thousands of his supporters who came to Kortin to hear him speak received a decidedly hostile reception. Though Dun Bert did not organize a counter-demonstration for the occasion, he did arrange a mass protest meeting the evening before. The following day rival groups were out decorating. A number of MÚSEUM lads under the direction of one of the older members pasted anti-MLP slogans all over the façade of the church. At the same time, a group of men were busy hanging posters and flags from the Labour club to welcome Dom Mintoff to the village.

At 4 p.m. buses and cars began to stream into the village with thousands of MLP supporters from all over the island. At about the same time the church bells began to call the faithful to a religious procession in honour of Our Lady of Fatima which Dun Bert had scheduled to take place during the Labour meeting. He himself stood in the square watching the faithful gather in the church. He also carefully observed those who passed by on their way to the Labour meeting, which was being held right behind the church. Most of the villagers who sympathized with the Labour Party but who did not support it openly did not attend the meeting. They were anxious to avoid the open break with the rest of the community which attending would have entailed. Besides, several mentioned that their confessors had told them that they would commit a mortal sin if they attended MLP meetings. All the open supporters of the MLP in the village went to the meeting.

The meeting began at about 4.30 p.m. and lasted for two hours. Shortly after it had started, Dun Bert's procession of nearly a thousand men, women and children slowly wound its way through the village and returned to the church for a period of prayer and worship. When the Labour meeting finally broke up, most of the outside supporters departed quickly, though a number were delayed because villagers had deflated the tyres of about a dozen of their cars. At this time people also began to leave the church. But the police, who were trying to keep a passage clear in the centre of the square for the stream of departing Labour supporters, kept them on the steps of the church. They waited there for a while and then began singing hymns and songs in honour of

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the Pope and the Archbishop, stopping now and then to shout insults at the passing Labour supporters. The square on the other side of the police cordon began to fill up with people returning from the meeting and others who left their houses to see what the excitement was about. Gradually the songs became louder and more excited, and the shouts hoarser. By then it was getting quite dark, but I could see Dun Mikiel in the front row, his hands thrust tensely into the pockets of his cassock, scowling at the passers-by while he smoked cigarette after cigarette. The tension by this time was almost electric. Suddenly, one of the local MLP supporters returning to the Labour club replied to a taunt by making a threatening gesture. The crowd in front of the church booed him loudly and surged forward. The police, anxious to hurry the trouble-maker off the square, pushed him a bit too hard and he stumbled and fell. This angered the crowd on the other side of the square and it began to press through the police cordon. At this point police reinforcements arrived and cleared the square in a few moments. Their prompt action prevented an ugly situation from going further, for there had been well over a thousand angry people facing each other, separated by less than two dozen unarmed policemen.

Four days after the meeting, Dun Bert organized a pilgrimage of reparation to atone for the insults of the MLP speakers. The procession of some 1,200 people reciting the Rosary escorted the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows through the area behind the church where the Labour meeting had been held. About 400 of the participants were outsiders who had come to Kortin from other parts of the island for the occasion. After the procession the crowd gathered in front of the church where a Mass was said. A noted Jesuit orator then rebutted the MLP speeches point by point. The whole affair had almost passed off without incident when a number of stones and bottles were thrown from behind walls at the buses and cars leaving the village.

But if there are relatively few face-to-face meetings of this kind in Kortin or elsewhere, there are many disputes that divide and weaken the clubs and associations. This matter has particularly affected Sur Gorg, the president of the Social Club, who feels responsible for preserving its unity in these difficult times. In Kelinu's, where many of the influential regulars are members of the Social Club, they say that it has become a Mintoff stronghold.

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Many of them have stopped going there. In point of fact, Sur Gorg and the secretary are strongly opposed to the Labour Party, though many of the younger men and some of the most active older members support it. A number of people living nearby have complained that members praise Mintoff in loud voices. There is growing pressure on Sur Gorg to ban all political conversation there. He has so far resisted the pressure, for he believes that if he were to give in, he would drive away the very members who form the backbone of the club. His chief problem, as he described it to me, is how to focus the attention of the members on something other than politics. He is therefore doing his best to obtain the permits necessary to open the theatre for which they have been planning and saving for years. He feels that in the excitement of building, the members will forget their political differences and reunite, and thus the club will pass safely through this crisis. But the permits have been slow in coming and meanwhile the pressure on him is building up. Two important members of the committee have already resigned, 'under the influence of those busy-bodies in Kelinu's', as some members described it.

The men in charge of the St. Martin Band Club in Farrug face much the same problem. As has already been noted, most of the leaders of the two political blocs in the village are members of the St. Martin club, and several of them are on its committee. This difference of political loyalty often provokes quarrels over matters of policy. During the centenary, for example, the committee were sharply divided over whether to salute the Archbishop with the customary barrage of fireworks when he entered the village to take part in the ceremony. The matter was put to a vote, and the MLP faction won. The disgruntled losers began talking about firing off their own salute of welcome. But the crisis that this action would have brought about was avoided when the Vicar-General officiated in place of the Archbishop, who was indisposed. As the MLP supporters had nothing against him, he received the full barrage of aerial bombs and fire crackers. The rift was thus healed, and all joined in to celebrate a rousing feast.

The following year the festa again brought a crisis with it. This time it was a far more serious one. Most of the young Labour supporters, in retaliation for the way the Church had attacked their party and its leaders, flatly refused to have anything to do with the feast. These young men included virtually all the partit's

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fireworkers, and without their expert help it was feared that the feast would be a miserable failure. Many Labour supporters also instructed their parents and wives not to contribute money to the feast. This depressing state of affairs continued for some time.

Then one day, about three months before the festa, Pietru, the young schoolteacher who is head of Catholic Action and treasurer of the St. Martin club, came up to me looking very pleased. He said that the feast was saved. Several events had combined to work up interest in it. It seems that most of the people had attended a large and very successful titular festa in a neighbouring village; the St. Roque fireworkers had shot off three extremely well-made test rockets; and he himself had played his tape recording of the St. Martin hymn, the anthem of the partit, over a loud-speaker in the square. These events revived interest in the festa and in the reputation of the partit. Immediately afterwards the secretary of the club, a Labour supporter who has set politics aside for the honour of the partit, called a committee meeting to discuss the problem of making fireworks. After several speeches urging members to keep their politics from spoiling the feast, the committee voted to make fireworks. Though two skilled fireworkers crossed the floor and agreed to help, none of the many experts among the rank and file followed suit. But soon after this political loyalty again began to smother the rekindled partit spirit, and one of the fireworkers all but dropped out. Moreover, Pietru, who is the village's most eloquent and outspoken enemy of the Labour Party, began to preach so vehemently to those he calls the 'lost sheep' of the club, that he antagonized many. His fund-raising suffered as a result.

About a month after this I met Toni at a festa in a neighbouring village, and we had a long talk away from the interested eyes and ears of Farrug. Toni has been a member of the St. Martin Club committee for nearly twenty years, and until some months ago had been vice president. He was clearly very worried about the club. People were already beginning to draw parallels between the present situation and the events that led up to the split in 1930. He said he was doing his best to discourage such talk, and had now begun working hard to avoid an open break.

He pointed out that he had experienced many crises in the partit and favoured a less blunt approach to winning back the interest of the MLP members than did the crusading Pietru. He felt that he

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had already had some success wooing members back on a personal basis by talking only of the honour of the partit and leaving politics out altogether. He stressed that the main problem was not so much the feast but the survival of the club. 'If we can just weather out the storm until after the election we can save it.' He went on to describe how it had taken years to heal the division after the seceding Strickland supporters had rejoined in 1935. 'We must avoid a split at all costs, and the only way we can do that is to bury our political differences.' His technique for doing this was to have as few formal committee meetings as possible, to avoid discussing controversial subjects and to vote in secret, for in these times 'an open vote divides the members'.

The wise counsel and efforts of the older members, who have set politics aside, has so far kept the younger hot-heads from splitting the club. In spite of all the obstacles in its way, the feast of St. Martin turned out to be a good show. Though many supporters did not contribute, others gave more than usual and there were enough funds for a good feast. About a dozen boys worked under the direction of the two adult fireworkers, and made most of the fireworks. They gave a very good account of themselves, though not one of them is old enough (18) to join the club as a formal member. All are Catholic Action members. In fact, except for a few St. Roque boys, they are the only ones left in the society. The Catholic Action group once numbered almost fifty. The others, the sons of Labour families, had been forced out by the vote of loyalty to the Archbishop which the association's national headquarters had demanded. But their enthusiasm could not quite make up for their youth or their lack of numbers. During the Friday demonstration for the saint some outsiders who were supporters of the guest band had to help them carry the statue of their patron part of the way. This was a great comedown from the previous year, when his followers were so numerous that they had to struggle for a turn to carry him. But the noise and the gay atmosphere of the celebration rekindled the interest of a number of the Labour supporters. Several helped to erect the decorations on Saturday; a few even joined in one of the band matches.

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VI

It is of course an open question how much longer the intense partit spirit can survive in the face of the political division now cutting across all festa partiti. In Farrug the division between the festa partiti, such a strong force in the past, is now of less importance as a principle of social organization than the rivalry between the supporters and opponents of the MLP. The relative importance in Farrug, as everywhere, of this latter division is directly related to the intensity of the conflict at the national level between the MLP and the Church. If it decreases, so will that at the village level. But the longer it lasts, the more difficult it will be to remove it completely from the social scene. Both the Church and the Labour Party, through their respective societies, committees and social clubs, are building up an institutional framework that is incorporating this political opposition on a permanent basis in all villages. This is taking place in much the same way as the confraternities and social clubs a hundred years ago made permanent the conflict between rival factions competing over the celebration of saints.

The rivalry between the Church and the MLP, as well as that between competing political parties, reflects the increasing involvement of the villager in the political life of his country. It was perhaps only due to Malta's peculiar position as a colony and an island fortress, a role which effectively prevented the development of an active internal political life of the more conventional kind, that competition over church privileges and saints was able to assume the importance it has. It is not surprising that the changing nature of Malta's strategic and constitutional position should alter the tempo and character of its internal political life. In the villages, this change is reflected in the weakening of the festa partiti by national political issues.

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patrons; others have established fairly close contact with them through business relations.

The patronage of the parish priest has traditionally been important. Not only are all villagers his spiritual clients, but he is also a source of charity and assistance in many fields. He serves his parishioners individually in the capacity of legal adviser, character reference and often also as letter-writer and banker. He frequently argues their claims against the government. He also represents the interests of the community at large, and attempts, often successfully, to obtain improved public amenities such as new roads, street lighting and so on. At least, this is the role that he occupied until the introduction of representative government.

III

Influence through the networks of personal relations and patrons is the traditional method of handling contact with authority. It still operates when representative government is in abeyance. But the advent of elected government introduced a new set of relations, and provided a new focus of power. Political parties and professional politicians provided new and surer channels of influence and sources of patronage, though they have not replaced the old ones. The villager now uses both old and new channels, separately or together.

The organization of all parties, at least before Mintoff reorganized the Labour Party, was rather simple. Party interests were represented in the villages by personal canvassers or party agents, as well as by the candidates themselves. The old Labour Party under Paul Boffa had a number of village party committees. When the party was returned to power, patronage and influence flowed abundantly, and brought the whole structure into vigorous life. The canvassers became important people who could pass along requests and schedule appointments with the local MLA's and even the Ministers. They also helped the local MLA's prepare the lists of people who were to be given jobs, for until 1955 most of the lower-grade industrial labourers with the Public Works Department were employed upon the recommendation of the local MLA's. Politicians who held office before 1955 often told me that making out the employment rosters and dealing with the daily queue of job-seekers were among their most difficult and

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time-consuming tasks. To help as many as possible, they often made up new job rosters every few months.

Canvassers would often expect presents for their work as intermediaries and for the favours they promised or secured. By and large, the party agents or canvassers were not popular figures, at least in retrospect. I came across many accounts of how they had exploited their positions to enrich themselves. The usual story was that they had accepted gifts – a rabbit, some chickens, a bottle of whisky or even cash – but had not assisted as they had promised. These tales may or may not be true; I had no way of checking. It is significant, however, that persons of all political colours, including former Ministers and MLA's, believe them to be true.

Mintoff's government did much to change the course of the stream of political patronage. To begin with, shortly after it came into office in 1955, the MLP passed a law which made it compulsory for those seeking employment with the government as industrial labourers to register with the Department of Emigration, Labour and Social Welfare.[1] There they had to wait their turn. This took away from MLA's a considerable source of patronage. The MLP also established special sub-committees of the Labour Committees in each village to deal with the complaints and requests of the local inhabitants. A member of the sub-committee was generally available to the public for an hour or two every evening. All requests for assistance and complaints were discussed by the entire sub-committee, which would countersign the routine ones and send them along to the appropriate government department. More important matters were brought personally to the attention of the civil servant concerned by a member of the sub-committee. Complicated requests and serious complaints were forwarded to the District Committee, where they were discussed at the regular weekly meetings with the district MLA's, who might then take the matter up directly with the Minister. Civil servants, on the whole, handled complaints and requests for action from the Local Committees with much the same dispatch they would give a request from their Minister. Some Ministers even went so far as to instruct their Department Heads to ignore all complaints brought to them by private persons, especially parish priests. They were told only to act on those presented by the Local Committee.

[1] Act No. XIV, 1955: 'An Act to Make Provisions for the Establishment and Regulation of an Employment Service.'

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Another very important function the Local Committees performed during the period the MLP was in power was to obtain improvements for the village. Requests for drainage, new roads, street lighting and, above all, new schools, were submitted to the District Committees. There the proposals were screened and given priority ratings by the committee members and the district MLA's. When these projects were implemented, and a large number were, the Local Committees naturally received credit for them. This added to their claim to represent their villages, and strengthened the formal structure of the party.

This system of handling patronage and complaints gave the villager a direct contact with authority. It was a fairly simple procedure, and many considered it reasonably impartial, though of course it did help to be a member of the Labour Party in good standing. Moreover, the complainant, even though he might not succeed in his cause, had the satisfaction that it had received attention, and it did not cost him a nice fat rabbit. This does not mean that there was no abuse. Civil servants complained that they were often intimidated by zealous MLP members who threatened to report them to their Ministers if they did not comply as requested. This friction was particularly keen between the Local Committee members and the village police, street sweepers and teachers. One head teacher I knew was particularly bitter about his caretaker, who was a member of the village MLP committee. The caretaker would stroll into the head teacher's office if he disagreed with the disciplining of a child, for example, and threaten to report him to the Minister if he did not lighten the punishment.

But on the whole, the MLP made a concerted effort to take patronage out of the hands of canvassers and MLA's alike and channel it through the various committees of the party apparatus. This not only strengthened the party, it also won it considerable popularity. Moreover, it relieved MLA's and Ministers of a heavy administrative load; they were only called in on the more complicated matters. In short, the Local Committees came to function as branches of the government.

When the Labour Government resigned in 1958, the MLP clubs and committees lost the influence they had with government. They once more became merely propaganda and social centres. But the role they had played for three years in representing the interests of government at the village level and in

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forwarding the requests and complaints of the villagers to government had greatly increased their strength, and that of the party they represented. As the members operated as a formal committee and not as individuals, they had the esteem and respect of most of the community. They also had considerable power in local affairs. In fact, for three years the leaders of the Labour group in the village ranked alongside the parish priest and the professionals as the most prominent and influential citizens of the village. The canvassers of the rival parties had perhaps had power, but they had never had respect. Theirs was always rather an underhanded operation, that was often disowned by MLA's when they were confronted with it. The MLP, on the other hand, delegated responsibility to Local Committees, and the Ministers legitimized them by openly working through them in all their relations with the villages. Villagers were also openly encouraged to work through them. These committees thus served the ends of the Labour Party most successfully. It is quite likely, therefore, that in the future other parties will find it politically as well as administratively expedient to develop and work through village committees patterned on the model so successfully tested by the Labour Party.

The party system has come into direct conflict with the traditional relations between patron and client at relatively few points. This is largely because most patrons who desired to were able to move successfully into the new field of party politics. A notable exception are priests, who are no longer permitted by their Bishops to stand for national political office. Their power to influence authority has thus been weakened by the new source of patronage and influence open to their parishioners. In particular, parish priests came into open conflict with the village MLP committees during the Labour Party's time in power after 1955. Not surprisingly, their clash at the village level mirrored the dispute between the Archbishop and the MLP at the national level. That is, it was a conflict between the religious authority of the Church and the secular authority of the State, represented in the villages by the Local Committees of the Labour Party. Both the parish priest and the Local Committee claimed to represent the village, and both sought by mobilizing their supporters to advance their claim at the expense of their opponents. This invariably resulted in a struggle for power during which the Labour supporters were

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accused of being anti-clerical and against the Church because they opposed the will of the parish priest.

Shortly after Mintoff took office, the Local Committee in Kortin made plans to open a new avenue into the village. The scheme, first projected by government planners over sixty years before, was designed to ease the flow of traffic through the village and provide a wide, tree-lined promenade leading to the main square in front of the church. Unfortunately, the project required the demolition of four buildings, two of which were small chapels used as warehouses for the festa decorations. Because of this Dun Bert, the parish priest, bitterly opposed the scheme, as had his predecessors. He claimed that most of the village supported him. The Labour Committee, on the other hand, felt that it had the backing of the village, and went ahead with the project. The road was finally opened, and it proved to be a great success. But the two small churches were destroyed, and the relations between the Labour group and the parish priest remained hostile. Six years later, Dun Bert and his supporters were still pointing to the avenue as positive proof that the Labour Party is fundamentally opposed to the Church.

IV

But if the political parties have modified the traditional system of patronage somewhat by providing a new channel of influence for the villager, the professional politician of today is by and large the same traditional patron. That is, the successful politicians are largely drawn from the professional classes; they are still the doctors, the lawyers, the architects and the chemists. Indeed, until recently the lists of candidates often read like directories of the professional classes. This situation prevailed until about the time of the Labour Party split in 1949, when virtually all the professional class Labour MLA's sided with Dr. Boffa and formed the Workers' Party, while most of the MLP Executive and the rank and file supported Mintoff. After this the Labour Party asked people from all classes to stand as candidates, and began to push up working-class leaders trained in union and club politics. But the politicians from the professional class still heavily outnumber their working-class colleagues, even in the Labour Party.

Table 8 below illustrates this. Of the fifty MLA's elected in the

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1962 elections, three-fourths are members of the professional classes. The remainder are persons who, for the most part, have risen to positions of influence through party and trade union hierarchies.

TABLE 8. Occupation of Candidates Elected to the 1962 Malta Legislative Assembly

OCCUPATION	POLITICAL PARTY				
	Nationalist	*Labour*	*Other*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Professional	24	9	5	38	76
Administrative	1	4	2	7	14
Skilled Labour	—	3	2	5	10
Total	25	16	9	50	100

The way a political candidate recruits a following depends upon his status and party. All candidates recruit support through their relatives and friends; and all usually have a following in their own villages outside this circle of relatives. To get this, they must usually be successful politicians at the village level. It is for this reason that so many politicians are also presidents of local band and social clubs, and even of some of the lay apostolate societies. Next, every candidate must establish contact with the people in his electoral district outside the village. Since there are usually at least five candidates from each party standing in every district, each normally concentrates his campaign on one part of the district. He does this by making frequent rounds of all the band and social clubs and important wine shops in his territory. There he listens to complaints and requests and, in general, tries to establish a reputation as a generous and approachable person without committing himself to do specific favours. But above all, it is important for him to meet many people, for the Maltese voter does not like to give his first vote to a person he, or at least some member of his immediate family, does not know personally. Finally, all candidates tour their districts just before the election and make speeches.

Candidates who are doctors, lawyers, notaries, architects and so on, have a decided advantage. As professionals, they already have close personal contact with a large number of clients, many of whom are bound to them by debts, or obligated to them for help and favours. These obligations are important, for the Maltese villager does not like to receive something for nothing, and he

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557 662 666 does not rest easily until he has repaid it. This is as true of corporate groups such as the band clubs as it is of individuals. Frequently the financial circumstances of the client, or the very nature of the favour, make it difficult or impossible for him to meet his obligation. His vote, and those of his family, provide the logical and accepted means to this end. This extends the relationship between patron and client to include that between politician and constituent.

66 Candidates who do not have the professional qualifications or high status necessary to recruit a following in this way are at a disadvantage. This is especially true for many of the Labour Party candidates, whose education and social standing at times compare unfavourably with those of their rivals. It was principally to overcome this handicap that the Labour Party sought to strengthen the party at the expense of individual candidates. It did this by limiting the system of political patronage which prevailed under previous governments and curbing the influence of the canvassers. In fact, the MLP officially forbade its candidates to employ canvassers. (Though, of course, many candidates have informal canvassers in their friends, relatives and clients.) At the same time, the party directed its propaganda at building up the image of the party and its leader. Labour supporters were constantly urged to vote for the party and not for individuals. By and large its campaign has been most successful. Its sympathizers not only vote for candidates who do not conform to the traditional image of the professional patron-politician, but they also vote across class lines, i.e. the teacher voting for an ex-dockyard fitter.

578 621 65 666 All candidates have to take into account the parochial rivalries which often cut across their districts. This is particularly true of the rivalry between the festa partiti. It has been noted that there is often a political polarity between festa partiti in the same village, and that sometimes the rivalry is so strong that partisans vote against a political party simply because a leading member of the rival partit is a candidate for it. But the number of people who place loyalty to their festa partit before support of a political party is declining. Nonetheless, if parochial rivalry no longer determines which party will get the votes, it very often decides which of the candidates within the party will. Many people have assured me that it is almost unheard of for a member of a festa partit to vote for a member of the rival partit, even though both support the

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same political party. Thus a politician who is also a leading member of a festa partit always asks a rival candidate from his party to come to his village and canvass the party votes from the opposite festa partit.

Most people believe that politicians trade promises to assist festa partiti in return for votes. One well-known Labour politician who is the leader of the secondary festa partit in his own village, made such a promise to gain the support of a neighbouring secondary partit that was facing eviction. In return for the votes of the partit, he offered to introduce a bill into the Legislative Assembly which would prevent landlords from evicting band clubs. The proposition appealed to the partit and the bill, which gained a great deal of support for the Labour Party from other clubs as well, became law.[1] In fact, it was one of the first laws the MLP enacted after it was returned to office in 1955. Partly as a result of his promise of assistance, but also because of his keen interest in the problems of secondary festa partiti, this candidate became so identified with this neighbouring partit that he had to ask MLP candidates from the other side of the electoral district to bid for the Labour votes of the members of the opposite partit. He naturally asked them to canvass the Labour votes of the titular partit in his own village as well.

But perhaps the most famous case of this kind, and certainly the most conspicuous, took place in Gozo. For many years the supporters of the Leone partit in Rabat had been embarrassed by the fact that the statue of their beloved patron could not be taken in processions from the cathedral. There was simply no way for her to pass through the walls of the old citadel in which the cathedral was situated. The members of the partit wished to remedy this by breaching the wall and making a large gate, but the Antiquities Board strongly opposed the idea. Finally, an ambitious MLP candidate came to their rescue. He is alleged to have promised them help if they voted for him. Whether the deal for votes is true I do not know. I do know, however, that the politician was elected and succeeded in having a huge new gate torn in the historic citadel. That he did this at public expense, against the orders of his Ministers and in defiance of the Antiquities Board, is evidence of his ingenuity and single-mindedness. Of course, it might also have

[1] Act V, 1955: 'An Act to Amend the Reletting of Urban Property (Regulation) Ordinance.'

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to switch to the party with best chance of success, for they know that if he is elected, he will channel patronage to them, often at the expense of the rest of his electoral district.

This system of voting also encourages contests between candidates from the same party. Such contests, carried out in public and in the heat of a campaign, often create hostility among the leaders of the party, and weaken its solidarity.

Finally, because this proportional system makes it possible for popular minority candidates to be elected, it encourages dissident factions to hive off from the major parties and found new ones. This seriously weakens the parent parties. Thus, although the only political division of real importance is that between the supporters of the Archbishop and those who favour Mintoff, there are now six political parties in Malta. It is not surprising therefore that the minority parties, and Miss Strickland's Progressive Constitutional Party in particular, are strongly in favour of retaining the present electoral system. Without it they would not be represented. The Malta Labour Party, which favours a strong two-party system, would prefer to see substituted an electoral system which would eliminate the smaller parties and strengthen the major parties. The Nationalist Party, although it would benefit from a change in the electoral system which would eliminate many of its rivals, has remained relatively silent on this point. This is because most of its leading members are patron-politicians of the old school. They owe their political life and the influence they command to the electoral system which has enabled them to build their own personal political organizations. The Nationalist Party is a party of respected and influential men, but in their strength lies its weakness. It is a party of politicians, rather than a politician's party. Dr. Borg Olivier, the Nationalist Prime Minister, is a first among equals; he does not lead his party in the sense that Mintoff leads the Malta Labour Party.

In short the Maltese system of proportional representation facilitates the emergence of minority parties. It also weakens the major parties by promoting intra-party rivalry and helping to keep alive the tradition of local patron-politicians. These factors militate against the development of a strong central government. It can be argued forcefully that Malta, which is facing a critical period in its economic and constitutional development, is now in greater need of a strong central government than ever before. It

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none of these things. This study of village politics has thus been largely concerned with parish politics. In this field the Church is the arbiter of all issues of policy. It is therefore the authority that hands down decisions on matters which concern the community; it is also the authority against which disappointed petitioners rebel.

II

At the national level, the picture is similar. Since the Church for so long has represented the interests of a solidly Catholic people *vis-à-vis* the State, it has always exercised considerable influence, if not authority, in matters of national policy. Hence some groups have often disagreed with its decisions. Both during the late 'twenties and early 'thirties and more recently, political parties have rebelled against its authority. Their rebellions have given rise to conflicts that have divided the country.

Though the Maltese do not regard this conflict as permanent, it would seem from its recurrence during Malta's only two periods of sustained representative government that it is, in fact, inherent in the social system. That is, it has followed almost inevitably upon the introduction of elected government into a society linked as closely with the Church as Malta is. Issues of national policy, which in countries where the Church is not such an integral part of society would be regarded as purely political and devoid of religious content, in Malta become matters on which the Church feels obliged to make known its views. Disputes arise when the views of a political party differ from those held by the Church. The party then accuses the Church of interfering in politics, and is in turn charged by the Church with being anti-clerical. Political issues become religious ones, or, seen from another point of view, religious ones become political. But in the dispute which follows, people from all walks of life are forced to make a choice between Church and political party. The resulting conflict divides the islands into bitterly opposed factions.

The persistence of this conflict, of course, is partly dependent upon the continuing survival of a political party at variance with the Church. In the past this was Strickland's Constitutional Party; at present it is the Malta Labour Party; in the future it may be yet another. The conflict which divided the country thirty years ago diminished after Strickland made peace with the Church; it

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disappeared when the old Constitutional Party died out in the long period of Governor's rule and the war that followed. At present, however, the MLP shows no signs of weakening. On the contrary, it is as tightly united and strong today as it has ever been. Thus this conflict will in all probability continue to divide Malta and Gozo in the foreseeable future, though its intensity may fluctuate.

It is well to remember that this study was carried out at a time when the hostility between these two camps was at its peak. Some of the examples that have been given, therefore, are extreme cases which would have been quite inconceivable even ten years ago. It is also possible that ten years hence they will appear equally strange. But this does not detract from the relevance of the analysis, for if the examples given are ephemeral, the principles which they illustrate are permanent.

III

In many respects the rebellion of a political party against the authority of the Bishop is similar to that of a festa partit against its parish priest. There is an important difference, however; the festa partit can appeal an unfavourable decision of its parish priest to the Archbishop. If the latter rules against the partit, it can bring pressure to bear that may result in the transfer of the parish priest. A political party, on the other hand, cannot appeal the unfavourable decisions of the Bishop to any local authority, for in his diocese his word is law. Though in theory such disputes can be referred to the Holy See, in practice, as in the case of Strickland's conflict with the Church, they fester for so long that by the time Rome is brought in reconciliation is difficult, if not impossible. If in practice a political party cannot appeal to a higher authority, it can even less agitate for the replacement of the Bishop. Thus disputes remain unresolved and the supporters of the political party become progressively more anti-clerical. Finally, their anti-clericalism is equated with anti-Catholicism, and their rebellion against authority with revolt against the social order.

But is it in fact a revolution? It is important to draw a clear distinction between rebellion and revolution.[1] In the case of the former, people may turn against a leader personally, and may

[1] Cf. Max Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1959), p. 28.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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even try to remove him from office. But they do not attack the office itself. In contrast, a revolution aims at changing not only the office-holder, but also the nature of the office and the social order in which it functions. Though the Malta Labour Party has strongly criticized the Archbishop and the clergy, often in insulting language, for their refusal to endorse its integration scheme, and, later, its demands for independence, it has never suggested that the office of archbishop should be abolished or the Church suppressed. The Church, however, attacks Mintoff as though he were bent on overthrowing the established social order in general, and the Catholic Church in particular. The extremely severe sanctions that it has directed against the MLP and its leaders reflect this point of view.

There is a very real danger that this strong medicine may kill the patient, for there is evidence that the MLP's anti-clericalism is in fact becoming anti-Catholicism, and the rebellion a revolt against the Church. Some of the more extreme, educated Labour supporters are showing a growing interest in the ideologies of countries which have fought successful battles against the Church. Though the great majority of the Labour supporters would still like to be devout Catholics, a small but increasing number are beginning to question the social order. As one remarked to me, 'I'm regarded as a Communist by my neighbours and the Church, which denies me its sacraments. Have I anything to lose by becoming one?' Though Communist literature rarely finds its way into Malta, since it is illegal to send it in the mails, a number of persons have begun to listen regularly to Radio Moscow. A few are even discussing the possibility of joining another church.

IV

But in spite of this bitter conflict, Maltese villages are still tightly united communities, life goes on and the social order does not disintegrate. Considering everything, there has been relatively little open violence between the supporters of the Church and the Labour Party. If occasionally there was some, it was most often caused by or directed against outsiders, either those who married into the villages, or who were imported for some special occasion from other villages. The battle between the Gozitans and the Maltese Labour supporters was an extreme case of this kind. But

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578 621 665 794 there have been remarkably few of the overtly hostile attacks, common when festa partiti are registering disagreement. What accounts for the qualitative difference in the violence between the groups involved in these two types of conflict? What prevents the national political conflict from degenerating into widespread violence, from destroying normal relations, thus making shambles of the social order? Is it merely the presence of a large, efficient police force?

578 621 626 665 795 In point of fact, there are many institutions and ties that operate to exert pressure on the opponents to reach a settlement, and so prevent the dispute from destroying the social system. The most important of the factors that inhibit the spread of conflict is the existence of persons whose loyalties are divided between the conflicting sides. Such persons have a vested interest in the maintenance of peace and limitation of the area of conflict.[1]

The considerable difference between the disputes of festa partiti with the Church, and the conflict between the Church and the Labour Party, has been stressed. The disputes involving festa partiti are localized, their course is highly formalized, there are acknowledged peace-makers: they are clearly rebellions in the sense that Gluckman uses. These disputes are also tightly circumscribed by customary safeguards which keep them from spreading and channel them through set stages until they have been resolved. It is patterned action which, in spite of its occasional violence, does not threaten the position of the Church. In contrast, the conflict between the MLP and the Church is not localized, it is not circumscribed by a body of custom which keeps it from spreading, and there are no acknowledged peace-makers who can mediate between the disputants. Not only is it inherent, it is irresoluble. There is an air of revolt about it and if it were allowed to run to the violence of some of the clashes between festa partiti and the Church, it could throw the country into civil war. The violence of the festa partiti does not threaten the social order, that between supporters of the Church and the MLP would.

What keeps the conflict from becoming more violent are the thousands of persons who have their allegiances divided between the Church and the Labour Party. All these people work to keep the conflict from spreading, if not actually to make peace. Who are they? They are the countless persons whose families have been

[1] *Ibid., passim.*

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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divided by the conflict, the office-holders who have laid politics aside to preserve the unity of the clubs for which they are responsible, the many who have sought to avoid open commitments to either side, and to remain in contact with both. They are the people who, in spite of all that has been preached and said against them by both sides, still look to both the Archbishop and Mintoff as their leaders, the one in the religious sphere, the other in the political. They see nothing inconsistent in hanging pictures of the two side by side in their houses. All have a vested interest in peace; and all work in their own way to keep the conflict from spreading and destroying completely their customary way of life.

At one time the entire civil service worked to prevent the spread of conflict in much the same way. When the Labour Party took over the government many civil servants, forced by the nature of their office to carry out the orders of the party in power, were obliged to administer policies which were contrary to the declared interests of the Church. Their loyalties were thus often divided between the two. Some of the higher civil servants carried messages between the two sides. Others called at the Curia merely to assure the Church that they implemented unwillingly the controversial policies. Yet others acted quietly in their own various ways to reduce the tension between government and Church that made their own positions so uncomfortable. Civil servants at all levels thus worked to keep the Church and the Labour Government in touch with each other and exerted considerable pressure to prevent the relations between the two from deteriorating even more. But their conciliatory influence came to an end when the Labour Party resigned. It is not surprising, therefore, that with the removal of this bridge between the MLP and the Church, the conflict became more intense almost immediately.

The two sides are now linked together only by the many persons with conflicting allegiances. Yet their ability to keep the conflict from spreading is slowly being reduced by the uncompromising position of the Church which is forcing them to take sides openly. As these persons reluctantly do so, the important cross links that tie the two combatants together are snapped off one by one, and the conflict becomes progressively more intense.

• 2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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V

578 What of the future? It would seem likely that the present con-
665 flict will continue. The dispute between the Church and the
795 Labour Party has become institutionalized in many villages through their respective associations and social clubs. The major political activity at the village level will thus most likely continue to be a reflection of that at the national level. It will be a dispute between those who wish to preserve the identity of the village as a parish, with the dependence upon the Church that it implies, and the secular elements who wish to establish the village as a political unit apart from the Church. But there will also be other conflicting groups, such as the festa partiti, which will continue to manipulate this political division to their own advantage. The leader of one of the secondary festa partiti indicated to me how this may take place. He was discussing the recent attempts of the Association of Secondary Feasts to increase the scale of its members' feasts, and concluded by remarking, 'If the Archbishop doesn't increase our feast this year, ninety per cent of the club will vote for Mintoff in the coming election.' Thus in the future, as in the past, the Church will continue to be one of the central actors in the drama of Maltese village politics.

578 621 665 795 [626]

Z: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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[p. 143]

Appendix B

Extracts from the 1962 Electoral Manifesto of the Malta Labour Party[1]

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666

The Malta Labour Party reaffirm their democratic socialist principles which do not run counter to Christian beliefs and solemnly subscribe to:

(1) the right of every nation, however small, to govern itself and to determine its own international relations in its own best interest and for the furtherance of its own progress and prosperity.

(2) freedom of conscience. This ensures for every citizen the right to exercise his own religious beliefs without hindrance and at the same time to fulfil his civic duties without pseudo-religious interference.

(3) the equality of all citizens before the law of the land. This implies not only the adherence to the Charter of Human Rights but also the abolition of medieval privileges which have retarded our own social and economic progress. Any interference with the right of a democratically elected majority to implement the people's mandate is a crime.

(4) equal opportunities to all citizens. This entails freedom of speech at public meetings, in the press, on the air, universal suffrage, free compulsory education, full employment and adequate social services from the cradle to the grave. Whilst the right to private ownership is by no means denied, the state must exercise the positive function of preventing any individual or group of individuals from dominating the heights of the nation's economy and dictating living standards to their fellow citizens. The Malta Labour Party firmly believe in the right of the people to have the final say in the nation's vital means of production. All forms

[1] Source: *The Voice of Malta*, 7 and 13 January 1962.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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665 of Co-operative and Social ownership should therefore be encouraged in order to curb the excesses of unbridled capitalism.

666 (5) Charter of the United Nations and the equality of all the human races – black, white or coloured. In particular Maltese Labour believe in the right of every nation to choose the method of government and the social system most consonant with its economic environment and its special political and social stage of development. The division of the world into two huge power blocs, the one intent on destroying the other, militates against world peace and the brotherhood of man. Whilst therefore communism with its anti-democratic suppression of freedom of conscience, freedom of association and other restrictive human rights earns Labour's unequivocal condemnation, the means chosen so far to combat it – namely nuclear weapons and military alliances are equally reprehensible. Labour believe in a reinvigorated United Nation's Organization able to enforce the principles embodied in the Charter through an international police force.

II. INDEPENDENCE

648 Since time immemorial our islands have been dominated by
665 foreign powers. Our people have not therefore been the custodians
666 of these fundamental human rights. On the contrary our social, political and economic institutions have been at the mercy of foreign masters who have fashioned them to suit their own requirements. . . .

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1940) 1960
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almost as varied and barbaric as at the Holy Fire in Jerusalem. 527
During the rare pauses between the bangs of the explosives and the splutterings of the pyrotechnical diversions one was just able to catch the sound of the chanting of an ecclesiastical procession, faintly audible reminder that the excuse for all this sound was a religious anniversary.

Nor was this by any means all. In an open space outside 527
the village a band was trying in the face of considerable 533
difficulties to play a secular air from some opera, all the bandsmen dressed in what might at a distance have passed for a naval Commander's white uniform, with aiguillettes of yellow cord. All, that is to say, except the *maestro*, whom I still see in my mind's eye as an elderly, worn-out, languid, apathetic cynic in a drooping Panama hat, with a cigarette hanging limply from his lower lip. Two hundred yards away another band was competing with an entirely different tune. Not that it mattered in the least. Nobody was paying the slightest attention to the music; and, even if they had been, neither band had a hope of making its output prevail over the other component parts of the general din.

Likewise do I recall a *festa* in Gozo, where the band, in this case not in uniform, was playing as it marched round the village square. But it afforded the pleasant sight of a man in a brown Homburg hat nonchalantly beating with his right hand the big drum which was being carried fore and aft by two small boys, while fanning himself with his music, which he held in his left.

These particular bands were professionals hired for the 533
occasion, for the villages in question were not large enough 665
to possess bands of their own. But in the large casals the band is a local institution of far wider significance than the specifically musical. Next to the parish church it is probably the most important social nucleus of the township, and influential personages regard it as a distinction to be offered the patronage or honorary Presidency of its organization. It may have even a political connotation. In the towns which

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
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533 665 are populous enough to run to two bands these will as likely as not be identified with the opposing political parties.

3

357 No book about Malta, no chapter making mention of the country people, would be complete without reference to a class of Maltese largely drawn from the country-folk. In these days, when domestic service is shunned by potential employees and thought of more as a myth than as something that once existed by would-be employers, it is my pleasant duty to record that Maltese servants can be among the best in the world. Such, at all events, has been my experience and that of many of my friends in Malta. Where employer and employee have been able to establish a relationship of mutual esteem and respect (and few people are more ready to respond in this way than the Maltese domestic), the employer in Malta may confidently count not only upon receiving from members of the household staff faithful, efficient and loyal service but upon retaining, if he or she is only a sojourner in the island, their affectionate regard long after he or she has left its shores.

It is, however, regrettable but necessary to add that since these words were first written domestic servants are tending to become as rare in Malta as they are elsewhere.

114 357 Shortly after the First World War a gentleman named Eric Shepherd came to Malta as Professor of English Literature at the University, and remained there for three years. On his experiences during those three years Mr Shepherd subsequently wrote a book called *Malta and Me*,[1] which abounds in puckish humour and flashes of insight and is often extremely entertaining.

But partly because of its puckishness, partly because the author laid what might appear to some to be excessive emphasis on such drawbacks to life as may exist in Malta

[1] Selwyn and Blount, 1926.

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

of 1936, which superseded the original self-governing Constitution of 1921. In 1946 Sir Harold MacMichael, a distinguished retired administrator in the Middle East, was invited by the British Government to formulate detailed proposals for constitutional reform after consultation with the National Assembly. His recommendations[1] provided for a Legislative Assembly of forty members elected on a system of proportional representation and led to the re-establishment of self-government in September 1947.[2] But some responsible elements regretted that they made no provision for the Second Chamber or Senate which had existed under the Constitution of 1921.

The elections gave Malta the first Labour Government in its parliamentary history, under Dr (later Sir) Paul Boffa; this made way in 1950 for one formed by the Nationalists, whose earlier dismissal had led to the suspension of the Constitution in 1933.[3] The new Government was headed—for such are the vicissitudes of politics—by the veteran pro-Italian Enrico Mizzi, who had been interned in East Africa during the war and died in December 1950, three months after taking office. In 1951 his successor, the Nationalist Dr G. Borg Olivier, formed a Coalition with Dr Boffa's "Malta Workers' Party"; this Coalition remained in power until defeated in 1955 by the Left-Wing Labour Leader, Mr Dominic Mintoff,[4] a former Rhodes Scholar who had been Minister of Public Works and Reconstruction in the Boffa Ministry but seceded from his former chief in 1950.

Already in the time of Dr Borg Olivier there had been inaugurated a series of talks in London between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Maltese Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition on proposed changes in Malta's

[1] Published in 1947 as Colonial No. 207 and analysed in the White Paper "Malta; Statement on Constitutional Reform (Comd. 7014) of Jan. 1947."

[2] See p. 137.

[3] See pp. 135–137.

[4] Mintoff is a variation of the name usually spelled Mintuf, which is the Maltese word meaning 'plucked.'